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THE IDIOT.

PART I.

I.

TOWARDS the end of November, during a thaw, at nine o'clock one morning, a train on the Warsaw and Petersburg railway was approaching the latter city at full speed. The morning was so damp and misty that it was only with great difficulty that the day succeeded in breaking; and ten paces or so from the carriage windows it was almost impossible to distinguish anything.

Some of the passengers by this particular train were returning from abroad; but the third class carriages were the best filled, chiefly with insignificant persons of various occupations and degrees, picked up at the different stations nearer town. All of them seemed weary, and most of them had sleepy eyes and a shivering expression, while their complexions generally appeared to have taken the colour of the fog outside.

When day dawned, two passengers in one of the third class carriages found themselves opposite each other; both were young fellows, both were lightly and rather poorly dressed, both had remarkable faces, and both were evidently anxious to start a conversation. If they had but known why, at this particular moment, they were both remarkable persons, they would undoubtedly have wondered at the strange chance which had set them down opposite to one another in a third class carriage of the Warsaw Railway Company.

One of them was a young fellow of about twenty-seven, not tall, with black curly hair, and small, grey, fiery eyes. His nose

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was broad and flat, and he had high cheek bones; his thin lips were constantly compressed into an impudent, ironical—it might almost be called a malicious smile; but his forehead was high and well formed, and atoned for a good deal of the ugliness of the lower part of his face. A special feature in this physiognomy was its death-like pallor which gave to the whole man an indescribably emaciated appearance in spite of his hard look, and at the same time a sort of passionate and suffering expression which did not harmonize with his impudent, sarcastic smile and keen, self-satisfied bearing. He wore a large fur—or rather astrachan—overcoat, which had kept him warm all night, while his neighbour had been obliged to bear the full severity of a Russian November night on his shivering back, entirely unprepared. The latter had on a wide sleeveless mantle with a large cape to it; the sort of cloak one sees upon travellers during the winter months in Switzerland or North Italy; but by no means adapted to the long cold journey through Russia, from Eydkuhnen to St. Petersburg.

The wearer of this cloak was a young fellow, also of about twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, slightly above the middle height, very fair, with a thin, pointed, and very light coloured beard; his eyes were large, blue, and had an intent look about them, but with that quiet heavy expression which some people affirm to be a peculiarity as well as evidence of an epileptic subject. His face was decidedly a pleasant one for all that, refined, but quite colourless, except for the circumstance that at this moment it was blue with cold. In his hand he held a bundle made up of an old faded piece of stuff, and apparently containing all his travelling wardrobe. He wore thick shoes and gaiters, which, with the rest of his appearance, was very un-Russian.

His black-haired neighbour inspected all these peculiarities, having nothing better to do, and at length remarked, with that rude enjoyment of the discomforts of others which the common classes so often show:

"Cold?"

"Very," said his neighbour, readily, "and this is a thaw, too, fancy if it had been a hard frost! I never thought it would be so cold in the old place. I've grown quite out of the way of it."

"What, been abroad, I suppose?"

"Yes, straight from Switzerland."

"Wheugh! my goodness!" the black-haired young fellow whistled, and then guffawed.

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The conversation proceeded. The readiness of the fair-haired young man in the cloak to answer all his opposite neighbour's questions was surprising; he seemed to have no suspicion of any impertinence or inappropriateness in the fact of such questions being put to him. Replying to them, he made known to the inquirer that he certainly had been long absent from Russia, more than four years; that he had been sent abroad for his health; that he had suffered from some strange nervous malady—a kind of fit or Vitus's dance, involving convulsive spasms. His interlocutor burst out laughing several times at his answers; he laughed most of all, when to the question, "whether he had been cured?" the patient replied:

"No, they did not cure me."

"Hey! that's it! you stumped up your money for nothing, and we believe in those fellows, here!" remarked the black-haired individual, sarcastically.

"Gospel truth, sir, Gospel truth!" exclaimed another passenger, a shabbily dressed man of about forty, who looked like a clerk, and possessed a red nose and a very blotchy face; "Gospel truth! all they do is to get hold of our good Russian money free gratis and for nothing."

"Oh, but you're quite wrong in my particular instance," said the Swiss patient, quietly; "of course I can't argue the matter, because I know only my own case; but *my* doctor gave me money—and he had very little—to pay my journey back, besides having kept me at his own expense, while there, for nearly two years."

"Why? No one else to pay?" asked the black-haired one.

"Yes—Mr. Pavlicheff, who had been supporting me there, died a couple of years ago; I wrote to Mrs. General Epanchin at the time (she is a distant relative of mine), but she did not answer my letter. And so eventually I came back."

"And where have you come to?"

"That is—where am I going to stay? I—I really don't quite know yet, I—"

Both the listeners laughed again.

"I suppose your whole set-up is in that bundle, then?" asked the first.

"I bet anything that's it!" added the red-nosed passenger, with extreme satisfaction, "and that he has precious little in the luggage van!—though of course poverty is no crime—we must remember that!"

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It appeared that it was indeed as they had surmised. The young fellow hastened to admit the fact with wonderful readiness.

"Your bundle has some importance, however," continued the clerk, when they had laughed their fill (it was observable that the subject of their mirth joined in the laughter when he saw them laughing); "for though I dare say it is not stuffed full of friedrichs d'or and louis d'or—to judge from your costume and gaiters—still—if you can add to your possessions such a valuable property as a relation like Mrs. General Epanchin, then your bundle becomes a significant object at once; that is, of course, if you really are a relative of Mrs. Epanchin's and have not made a little error through—well, absence of mind which is very common to human beings; or, say—through a too luxuriant fancy?"

"Oh, you are right again," said the fair-haired traveller, "for I really am *almost* wrong when I say she and I are related; she is hardly a relation at all; so little, in fact, that I was not in the least surprised to have no answer to my letter. I expected as much."

"H'm! you spent your postage for nothing, then. H'm! you are candid, however—and that is commendable. H'm! Mrs. Epanchin—oh yes! a most eminent person; I know her. As for Mr. Pavlicheff, who supported you in Switzerland, I know him too—at least, if it was Nicolai Andréevitch of that name? a fine fellow he was—and had a property of four thousand souls in his day."

"Yes, Nicolai Andréevitch—that's what they call him," and the young fellow looked earnestly and with curiosity at the all-knowing gentleman with the red nose.

This sort of character is met with pretty frequently in a certain class—a specimen of the *all-knowing* type, who know everyone—that is, they know where a man is employed, what his salary is, whom he knows, whom he married, what money his wife had, who are his cousins, and second cousins, etc., etc. These men generally have about a hundred pounds a year to live on, and they spend their whole time and talents in the amassing of this style of knowledge, which they reduce—or raise—to the standard of a science.

During the latter part of the conversation the black-haired young man had become very impatient; he stared out of the window, and fidgeted, and evidently longed for the end of the journey. He was very absent; he would appear to listen—and heard nothing; and he would laugh of a sudden, evidently with no idea of what he was laughing about.

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"Excuse me," said the red-nosed elderly man to the young fellow with the bundle, rather suddenly; "whom have I the honour to be talking to?"

"Prince Lef Nicolaievitch Muishkin," replied the latter, with perfect readiness.

"Prince Muishkin? Lef Nicolaievitch? H'm! I don't know, I'm sure! I may say I have never heard of such a person," said the clerk, thoughtfully; "at least, the name, I admit, is historical; Karamsin must mention the family name, of course, in his history—but as an individual—besides one never hears of any Prince Muishkin now-a-days."

"Of course not," replied the prince; "there are none, except myself; I believe I am the last and only one. As to my forefathers, they have always been a poor lot; my own father was a sub-lieutenant in the army. I don't know how Mrs. Epanchin comes into the Muishkin family, but she is descended from the Princes Muishkin, and she, too, is the last of her line."

"Ha! ha! last of her line! how funny it sounds!" said the clerk; the prince did not see the joke.

"And did you learn—science and all that with your professor over there?" asked the black-haired passenger.

"Oh yes—I did learn a little, but—"

"I've never learned anything whatever," said the other.

"Oh, but I learned very little, you know!" added the prince, as though excusing himself; "they could not teach me very much on account of my illness."

"Do you know the Rogojins?" asked his questioner, abruptly.

"No, I don't—not at all! I hardly know anyone in Russia; why, is that your name?"

"Yes, I am Rogojin, Parfen Rogojin."

"Parfen Rogojin? dear me—then don't you belong to those very Rogojins, perhaps—" began the clerk, with a very perceptible increase of civility in his tone.

"Yes—those very ones." interrupted Rogojin, impatiently, and with scant courtesy. I may remark that he had not once taken any notice of the blotchy-faced passenger and had addressed all his remarks hitherto direct to the prince.

"Dear me—is it possible?" observed the clerk, while his face assumed an expression of great deference and servility—if not absolute alarm: "what, a son of that very Semen Rogojin—hereditary honourable citizen—who died a month or so ago and left two millions and a half of roubles?"

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"And how do *you* know that he left two millions and a half of roubles?" asked Rogojin, disdainfully, and not deigning so much as to look at the other. "However, it's true enough that my father died a month ago, and that here am I returning from Pskoff, a month after, with hardly a boot to my foot. They've treated me like a dog! I've been ill of fever at Pskoff the whole while and not a line, not a farthing of money, have I ever received from my mother or my confounded brother!"

"And now you'll have a million roubles, at least—goodness gracious me!" exclaimed the clerk, rubbing his hands.

"Five weeks since I was just like yourself," continued Rogojin, addressing the prince; "with nothing but a bundle and the clothes I wore; I ran away from my father and came to Pskoff to my aunt's house, where I caved in at once with fever, and he went and died while I was away. All honour to my respected father's memory—but he uncommonly nearly killed me all the same. Give you my word, prince, if I hadn't cut and run then, when I did, he'd have murdered me like a dog."

"I suppose you angered him somehow?" asked the prince, looking at the millionaire in the fur cloak, with considerable curiosity. But though there may have been something remarkable in the fact that this man was heir to millions of roubles, there was something about him which surprised and interested the prince more than that. Rogojin, too, seemed to have taken up this conversation with the prince with unusual alacrity; it appeared that he was still in a considerable state of excitement, if not absolutely in high fever, and was in real need of some one to talk to for the mere sake of talking, as a safety valve to his agitation.

As for his red-nosed neighbour, the latter—since the information as to the identity of Rogojin—hung over him, seemed to be living on the honey of his words and in the breath of his nostrils, catching at every syllable as though it were a pearl of great price.

"Oh, yes; I angered him—I certainly did rile him," replied Rogojin, "and not without reason. But what puts me out so is my brother; of course my mother couldn't do anything—she's too old—and whatever brother Senka says is law for her! Why couldn't he let me know? He sent a telegram, they say. What's the good of a telegram? It frightened my aunt so that she sent it back to the office unopened, and there it's been ever

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since! It's only thanks to Konief that I heard at all; he wrote me all about it. He says my brother cut off the gold tassels from my father's coffin, at night, 'because they're worth a lot of money!' says he. Why, I can get him sent off to Siberia for that alone, if I like; it's sacrilege. Here, you—scarecrow!" he added, addressing the clerk at his side, "is it sacrilege or not, by law?"

"Sacrilege, certainly—certainly sacrilege," said the latter.

"And it's Siberia for sacrilege, isn't it?"

"Undoubtedly so; Siberia, of course!"

"They will think that I'm still ill," continued Rogojin to the prince; "but I sloped off quietly, seedy as I was, took the train and came away. Aha, brother Senka, you'll have to open your gates and let me in, my boy! I know he told tales about me to my father—I know that well enough; but I certainly did rile my father then about Nastasia Philipovna, that's very sure, and that was all my own doing, too!"

"Nastasia Philipovna?" said the clerk, as though trying to think out something.

"Come, you know nothing about *her*," said Rogojin, impatiently.

"And supposing I do know something?" observed the other, triumphantly.

"Bosh! there are plenty of Nastasia Philipovnas. And what an impertinent beast you are," he added angrily; "I thought some creature like you would hang on to me as soon as I got hold of my money."

"Oh, but I do know, as it happens," said the clerk in an aggravating manner. "Lebedeff knows all about her; you are pleased to reproach me, your excellence, but what if I prove that I am right after all? Nastasia Philipovna's family name is Barashkof—I know, you see—and she is a very well known lady, indeed, and comes of a good family, too; and she is rather intimate with one Totski, Afanassy Ivanitch, a man of considerable property, a director of companies, and so on, and a great friend of General Epanchin, who is interested in the same matter as he is."

"My eyes!" said Rogojin, really surprised at last, "the devil take the fellow, how does he know that?"

"Why, he knows everything—Lebedeff knows everything! I was a month or two with Lihachóf after his father died, your excellency, and while he was knocking about—he's in the debtor's prison now—I was with him, and he couldn't do a

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thing without Lebedeff; and I got to know Nastasia Philipovna and several other people at that time."

"Nastasia Philipovna? Why, you don't mean to say that she and Lihachóf—"

"No, no, no, no, no! nothing of the sort, I assure you!" said Lebedeff, hastily, "oh dear no, not for the world! Totski's the only man with any chance *there*. Oh, no! He takes her to his box at the opera at the French theatre of an evening, and the officers and people all look at her and say, 'By Jove, look at Nastasia Philipovna! isn't she lovely?' but no one ever gets any further than that."

"Yes, it's quite true," said Rogojin, frowning gloomily; "so Zaleshoff told me. I was walking about the Nefsky one fine day, prince, in an old coat, when she suddenly came out of a shop and stepped into her carriage; I swear I was all of a blaze at once. Then I met Zaleshoff—looking like a hair-dresser's assistant, got up as fine as I don't know who, while I looked like a tinker. 'Don't flatter yourself, my boy,' says he; 'she's not for such as you; she's a princess, she is, and her name is Nastasia Philipovna Barashkova, and she lives with her guardian Totski, who wishes to get rid of her because he's growing rather old—fifty-five or so—and wants to marry a certain beauty, the loveliest woman in all Petersburg.' And then he told me that I could see Nastasia Philipovna at the opera-house that evening, if I liked, and described which was her box. Well, I'd like to see my father allowing any of us to go to the theatre; he'd sooner have killed us, any day. However, I went for an hour or so and saw Nastasia Philipovna, and I never slept a wink all night after. Next morning my father happened to give me two government loan bonds to sell, worth nearly five thousand roubles each. 'Sell them,' says he, 'and then take seven thousand five hundred roubles to the office, give them to the cashier, and bring me back the rest of the two thousand, without looking in anywhere on the way; look sharp, I shall be waiting for you.' Well, I sold the shares, but I didn't take the seven thousand roubles to the office; I went straight to the 'English Magazine' and chose a pair of earrings, with a diamond the size of a nut in each; they cost four hundred roubles more than I had, so I gave them my name and they trusted me. With the earrings I went at once to Zaleshoff's; 'Come on!' I said, 'come on to Nastasia Philipovna's,' and off we went without more ado. I tell you I hadn't a notion of what was about me or before me or below my feet all the way; I saw nothing whatever. We went

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straight into her drawing-room, and then she came out to me.

"I didn't say right out who I was, but Zaleshoff said: 'From Parfen Rogojin, in memory of his first meeting with you yesterday; be so kind as to accept these!'

"She opened the parcel, looked at the earrings, and laughed.

"'Thank your friend Mr. Rogojin for his kind attention,' says she, and bowed and went off. Why didn't I die there on the carpet? The worst of it all was, though, that the beast Zaleshoff must have had all the credit of it! I was short and abominably dressed, and stood and stared in her face and never said a word, because I was shy, like an ass! and there was he all in the fashion, pomaded and dressed out, with a smart tie on, bowing and scraping, as smug as be-d——d; and I bet anything she took him for me all the while!

"'Look here now,' I said, when we came out, 'none of your interference here after this—do you understand?' He laughed: 'And how are you going to settle up with your father?' says he. I thought I might as well jump into the Neva at once without going home first; but it struck me that I wouldn't, after all, and I went home looking like one of the damned."

"My goodness!" shivered the clerk, "and his father," he added, for the prince's instruction, "and his father would have given him a ticket to the other world to save ten roubles any day—not to speak of ten thousand!"

The prince observed Rogojin with great curiosity; he seemed paler than ever at this moment.

"What do you know about it?" cried the latter. "Well, my father learned the whole story at once, and Zaleshoff blabbed it all over the town besides. So he took me upstairs and locked me up and lectured me for an hour; 'this is only a foretaste,' says he; 'wait a bit till night comes, and I'll come back and take an affectionate farewell of you!'

"Well, what do you think? The old fellow went straight off to Nastasia Philipovna, touched the floor with his forehead, and began blubbering and beseeching her on his knees to give him back the diamonds. So after a while she brought the box and flew out at him: 'There,' she says, 'take your earrings, you wretched old miser; although they are ten times dearer than their value to me now that I know what it must have cost Parfen to get hold of them! Give Parfen my compliments,' she says, 'and thank him very much!' Well, I borrowed twenty-five roubles from a friend, and off I went to Pskoff to my aunt's; the

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old woman there lectured me so that I left the house and went a drinking tour round the public-houses of the place; I was in a high fever when I got back to Pskoff, and by nightfall I was lying full length in the streets somewhere or other!"

"Oho! we'll make Nastasia Philipovna sing another song now!" giggled Lebedeff, rubbing his hands with glee; "hey, my boy. We'll get her some proper earrings now; we'll get her such earrings that—"

"Look here," cried Rogojin, seizing him fiercely by the arm, "look here, if you so much as name Nastasia Philipovna again, I'll tan your hide as sure as you sit there!"

"Aha! do—by all means! if you tan my hide you won't turn me away from your society anyhow. You'll bind me to you, with your lash, for ever. Ha, ha! here we are at the station, though."

Sure enough, the train was just steaming in as he spoke.

Though Rogojin had declared that he left Pskoff secretly, still, a large collection of friends had assembled to greet him, and did so with profuse waving of hats and shouting.

"Why, there's Zaleshoff here too!" he muttered, gazing at the scene with a sort of triumphant but unpleasant smile; then he suddenly turned to the prince: "Prince, I don't know why I have taken a fancy to you; perhaps, because I met you just when I did; but, no, it can't be that, for I met this fellow (nodding to Lebedeff) too, and I have not taken a fancy to him by any means; come to my place, prince, we'll take off those gaiters of yours and dress you up in a smart fur coat, the best we can buy; you shall have a dress coat, best quality, white waistcoat, anything you like, and your pocket shall be full of money, come, and you shall go with me to Nastasia Philipovna. Now then, will you come or no?"

"Accept, accept, Prince Lef Nicolaievitch!" said Lebedeff solemnly; "don't let it slip! Accept, quick!"

Prince Muishkin rose and stretched out his hand courteously, while he replied with some cordiality:

"I will come with the greatest pleasure, and thank you very much for taking a fancy to me. I daresay I may even come to-day if I have time, for I tell you frankly that I like you very much too. I liked you especially when you told us about the diamond earrings; but I liked you before that as well, though you have such a dark-clouded sort of face. Thanks very much for the offer of clothes and a fur coat; I certainly shall require both clothes and coat very soon. As for money, I have hardly a copeak about me at this moment."

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"You shall have lots of money; by the evening I shall have plenty; come along!"

"That's true enough, he'll have lots before evening!" put in Lebedeff.

"But, look here, are you a great hand with the ladies? Let's know that first?" asked Rogojin.

"Oh no, oh no!" said the prince; "I couldn't, you know, my illness—I hardly ever saw a soul."

"H'm! well—here, you fellow—you can come along with me now if you like!" cried Rogojin to Lebedeff, and so they all left the carriage.

Lebedeff had his desire; he went off with the noisy group of Rogojin's friends towards the Voznesensky, while the prince's route lay towards the Litaynaya. It was damp and wet. The prince asked his way of passers-by, and finding that he was a couple of miles or so from his destination, he determined to take a droshky.

II.

GENERAL Epanchin lived in his own house near the Litaynaya. Besides this large residence—five sixths of which was let in flats and lodgings—the general was owner of another enormous house in the Sadóvaya bringing in even more rent than the first. Besides these houses he had a delightful little estate just out of town, and some sort of factory in another part of the city. Of late, General Epanchin, as every one knows, had a good deal to do with certain monopolies; he was also a voice, and an important one, in many rich public companies of various descriptions; in fact, he enjoyed the reputation of being a well-to-do man of busy habits, many ties, and affluent means. He had made himself indispensable in several quarters, amongst others in his department in the service; and yet it was a known fact that Fedor Ivanovitch Epanchin was a man of no education whatever, and had absolutely risen from the ranks.

This last fact could, of course, reflect nothing but credit upon the general; and yet the latter, though unquestionably a sagacious man, had his own little weaknesses—very excusable ones,—one of which was a dislike to any allusion to the above circumstance. He was undoubtedly a clever fellow. For in-

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stance, he made a point of never asserting himself when he would gain more by keeping in the back ground; and in consequence many exalted personages valued him principally for his humility and simplicity, and because "he knew his place." And yet if these good people could only have had a peep into the mind of this excellent fellow who "knew his place" so well!

As to age, General Epanchin was in the very prime of life; that is, about fifty-five years of age,—the flowering time of existence, when real enjoyment of life begins. His healthy appearance, good colour, sound, though discoloured teeth, sturdy figure, preoccupied air during business hours, and jolly bearing during his game at cards in the evening, all bore witness to his success in life, and combined to make existence a bed of roses to his excellency. The general was lord of a flourishing family, consisting of his wife and three grown-up daughters. He had married young, while still a lieutenant, his wife being a girl of about his own age, who possessed neither beauty nor education, and who brought him no more than fifty souls of landed property,—which little estate served, however, as a nest egg for far more important accumulations. The general never regreted his early marriage, or regarded it as a foolish youthful escapade; and he so respected and feared his wife that he was very near loving her. Mrs. Epanchin came of the princely stock of Muishkin, which if not a brilliant, was, at all events, a decidedly ancient family; and she was extremely proud of her descent.

With a few exceptions, the worthy couple had lived through their long union very happily. While still young the wife had been able to make important friends among the aristocracy, partly by virtue of her family descent, and partly by her own exertions; while, in after life, thanks to their wealth and to the position of her husband in the service, the pair took their places among the higher circles as their own by right.

During these last few years all three of the general's daughters—Alexandra, Adelaida, and Aglaya, had grown up and matured. Of course they were only Epanchins, but then their mother's family was noble; they might expect very considerable fortunes; their father had hopes of attaining to very high rank indeed in his country's service—all of which was very satisfactory. All three of the girls were decidedly pretty, even the eldest, Alexandra, who was close upon twenty-five years old. The middle daughter was now twenty-

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three, while the youngest, Aglaya, was just twenty. This youngest girl was absolutely a beauty, and had begun of late to attract considerable attention in society. But this was not all—for every one of the three was clever, well educated, and accomplished.

It was a matter of general knowledge that the three girls were very fond of one another, and supported each other in every way; it was even said that the two elder ones had made certain sacrifices for the sake of the idol of the household, Aglaya. In society they not only disliked asserting themselves, but were actually retiring. Certainly no one could blame them for being too arrogant or haughty, and yet everybody was well aware that they were proud and quite understood their own value. The eldest was musical, while the second was a clever artist, which fact she had concealed until lately. In a word, the world spoke well of the girls; but they were not without their enemies, and occasionally men whispered with awe of the number of books they had read.

They were in no hurry to marry. They liked good society, but were not mad over it. All this was the more remarkable, because they were quite aware of the character, hopes, and aims of their parents.

It was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon when the prince rang the bell at General Epanchin's door. The general lived on the second floor or flat of the house, and occupied as modest a lodging as his position permitted. A liveried servant opened the door, and the prince was obliged to enter into long explanations with this gentleman, who, from the first glance, looked at him and his bundle with grave suspicion. At last, however, on the repeated positive assurance that he really was Prince Muishkin, and must absolutely see the general on business, the bewildered domestic showed him into an adjoining room, a little ante-chamber to the general's study, there handing him over to another servant, whose duty it was to be in this ante-chamber all the morning, and announce visitors to the general. This second individual wore a dress coat, and was some forty years of age; he was the general's special study servant, and well understood his own value.

"Wait in the ante-chamber, please; and leave your bundle here," said the door-keeper, who did not hurry himself, and had sat down comfortably in his own easy-chair in the entrance hall; he looked at the prince in severe surprise as the latter returned and settled himself in another chair alongside, with

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his bundle on his knees. "If you don't mind, I would rather sit here with you," said the prince; "I should prefer it to sitting in there."

"Oh, but you can't stay in the entrance hall! you are a visitor—a guest, so to speak. Is it the general himself you wish to see?"

The man evidently could not take in the idea of such a shabby-looking visitor, and had decided to ask once more.

"Yes—I have business—" began the prince.

"I do not ask you what your business may be, all I have to do is to announce you; and unless the secretary comes in here I cannot do that."

The fellow's suspicions seemed to increase more and more; the prince was too unlike the usual run of daily visitors; and although the general certainly did receive, on business, all sorts and conditions of men, yet in spite of this fact the servant felt great doubts on the subject of this particular visitor. The presence of the secretary as an intermediary was, he judged, essential in this case.

"Surely you—are from abroad?" he inquired at last, in a confused sort of way; I believe he had begun his sentence intending to say, "Surely you are not Prince Muishkin, are you?"

"Yes, straight from the train! Did not you intend to say, 'Surely you are not Prince Muishkin?' just now, but refrained out of politeness?"

"H'm!" remarked the astonished servant.

"I assure you I am not deceiving you; you shall not have to answer for me. As to my being dressed like this, and carrying a bundle, there's nothing surprising in that—the fact is, my circumstances are not particularly rosy at this moment."

"H'm!—no, I'm not afraid of that, you see; I have to announce you, that's all. The secretary will be out directly—that is, unless you—yes, that's the rub—unless you—come, you must allow me to ask you—you've not come to beg, have you?"

"Oh dear no, you can be perfectly easy on that score. I have quite another matter on hand."

"You must excuse my asking, you know. Your appearance led me to think—but just wait for the secretary; the general is busy now, but the secretary is sure to come out."

"Oh—well, look here, if I have some time to wait, would

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you mind telling me, is there any place about where I could have a smoke? I have my pipe and tobacco with me."

"*Smoke?*" said the man, in shocked but disdainful surprise, blinking his eyes at the prince as though he could not believe his senses. "No, sir, you cannot smoke here, and I wonder you are not ashamed of the very suggestion. Ha, ha! a cool idea that, I declare!"

"Oh, I didn't mean in this room! I know I can't smoke here, of course. I'd adjourn to some other room, wherever you like to show me to. You see, I'm used to smoking a good deal, and now I haven't had a puff for three hours; however, just as you like."

"Now how on earth am I to announce a man like that?" muttered the servant. "In the first place, you've no right in here at all; you ought to be in the ante-chamber, because you're a sort of visitor—a guest, in fact—and I shall catch it for this. Look here, do you intend to take up your abode with us?" he added, glancing once more at the prince's bundle, which evidently gave him no peace.

"No, I don't think so. I don't think I should stay even if they were to invite me. I've simply come to make their acquaintance, and nothing more."

"How? make their acquaintance?" asked the man, in amazement, and with redoubled suspicion; "then why did you say you had business with the general?"

"Oh well, very little business. There is one little matter—some advice I am going to ask him for; but my principal object is simply to introduce myself, because I am Prince Muishkin, and Madame Epanchin is the last of her branch of the house, and besides herself and me there are no other Muishkins left."

"What—you're a relation then, are you?" asked the servant so bewildered that he began to feel quite alarmed.

"Well, *hardly* so. If you stretch a point, we are relations, of course, but so distant that one cannot really take cognizance of it. I once wrote to your mistress from abroad, but she did not reply. However, I have thought it right to make acquaintance with her on my arrival. I am telling you all this in order to ease your mind, for I see you are still far from comfortable on my account. All you have to do is to announce me as Prince Muishkin, and the object of my visit will be plain enough. If I am received—very good; if not, well, very good again. But they are sure to receive me, I should

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think; Mrs. General will naturally be curious to see the senior and only remaining representative of her family. She values her Muishkin descent very highly, if I am rightly informed."

The prince's conversation was artless and confiding to a degree, and the servant could not help feeling that as from visitor to common serving man this state of things was highly improper. His conclusion was that one of two things must be the explanation—either that this person was a common beggar, or that the prince, if prince he were, was simply a fool, without the slightest ambition; for a sensible prince with any ambition would certainly not wait about in entrance halls with servants, and talk of his own private affairs like this. In either case, would he not have to answer for this singular visitor?

"I really think I must request you to step into the anteroom!" he said, with all the insistance he could muster.

"Why? if I had been sitting there now, I should not have had the opportunity of making these personal explanations. I see you are still uneasy about me and keep eyeing my cloak and bundle. Don't you think you might go in yourself now, without waiting for the secretary to come out?"

"No, no! I can't announce a visitor like yourself without the secretary. Besides the general said he was not to be disturbed—he is with the Colonel C——. Gavrila Ardalionovitch goes in without announcing."

"Who may that be? a clerk?"

"What? Gavrila Ardalionovitch? oh no; he belongs to one of the Companies. Look here, at all events put your bundle down, here—look!"

"Yes, I will if I may; and—can I take off my cloak."

"Of course; you can't go in *there* with it on, anyhow."

The prince rose and took off his mantle, revealing a neat enough morning costume—a little worn, but well made. He wore a steel watch chain and from this chain there hung a silver Geneva watch. Fool the prince might be, still, the general's servant felt that it would not be correct for him to continue to converse thus with a visitor,—in spite of the fact that the prince pleased him somehow.

"And what time of day does the lady receive?" the latter asked, reseating himself in his old place.

"Oh, that's not in *my* province! I believe she receives at any time; it depends upon the visitors. The dressmaker goes in at eleven. Gavrila Ardalionovitch is allowed much earlier

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than other people too; he is even admitted to early lunch now and then."

"It is much warmer in the rooms here than it is abroad at this season," observed the prince; "but it is much warmer out of doors; as for the houses—a Russian can't live in them in the winter until he gets accustomed to them."

"Don't they heat them at all?"

"Well, they do heat them a little; but the houses and stoves are so different to ours."

"H'm! were you long away?"

"Four years! and I was in the same place all the while,—in one village."

"You must have forgotten Russia, hadn't you?"

"Yes, indeed I had—a good deal; and would you believe it? I often wonder at myself for not having forgotten how to speak Russian; even now, as I talk to you, I keep saying to myself 'how well I am speaking it.' Perhaps that is partly why I am so talkative this morning. I assure you, ever since yesterday evening I have had the strongest desire to go on and on talking Russian."

"H'm! yes; did you live in Petersburg in former years?" This good flunkey, in spite of his conscientious scruples, really could not resist continuing such a very genteel and agreeable conversation.

"In Petersburg? oh no! hardly at all, and now they say so much is changed in the place that even those who did know it well are obliged to relearn what they knew. They talk a good deal about the law courts, and changes there, don't they?"

"H'm! yes—that's true enough. Well now, how is the law over there, do they administer it more justly than here?"

"Oh, I don't know about that! I've heard a deal of good about our legal administration too. There is no capital punishment here for one thing."

"Is there over there?"

"Yes—I saw an execution in France—at Lyons. Schneider took me over with him to see it."

"What, did they hang the fellow?"

"No, they cut off people's heads in France?"

"What did the fellow do, yell?"

"Oh no—it's the work of an instant. They put a man inside a frame and a sort of broad knife falls by machinery—they call the thing a guillotine—it falls with fearful force and

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weight—the head springs off so quickly that you can't wink your eye in between. But all the preparations are so dreadful. When they announce the sentence, you know, and equip the criminal and tie his hands, and cart him off to the scaffold—that's the fearful part of the business. The people all crowd up—even women—though they don't at all approve of women looking on."

"No, it's not a thing for women."

"Of course not—of course not!—bah!—the criminal was a fine intelligent fearless man of a certain age, Le Gros was his name; and I may tell you—believe it or not, as you like—that when that man stepped upon the scaffold he *cried*, he did indeed,—he was as white as a bit of paper: isn't it a dreadful idea that he should have cried—cried! Who ever heard of a grown man crying from fear—not a child, but a man who never had cried before—a grown man of forty-five years. Imagine what must have been going on in that man's mind at such a moment; what dreadful convulsions his whole spirit must have endured; it is an abuse of man's right over the soul, that's what it is. Because it is said 'thou shalt not kill,' is he to be killed because he murdered some one else? no—it is not right—it's an impossible theory. I assure you, I saw the sight a month ago and it's dancing before my eyes to this moment. I dream of it, often."

The prince had grown animated as he spoke, and a light tinge of red suffused his pale face, though his way of talking was as quiet as ever. The servant followed his words with sympathetic interest; he clearly was not at all anxious to bring the conversation to an end. Who knows? perhaps he too was a man of imagination and with some capacity for thought.

"Well, at all events it is a good thing that there's no pain when the poor fellow's head flies off," he remarked.

"Do you know, though," cried the prince warmly, "you made that remark now, and everyone says the same thing, and the machine is designed with the purpose of avoiding pain, this guillotine I mean; but a thought came into my head then: what if it be a bad plan after all? you may laugh at my idea, perhaps—but I could not help its occurring to me all the same. Now with the rack and tortures and so on—you suffer terrible pain of course; but then your torture is bodily pain only (although no doubt you have plenty of that) until you die. But *here* I should imagine the most terrible part of the whole punishment is, not the bodily pain at all—but the

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certain knowledge that in an hour,—then in ten minutes, then in half a minute, then now—this very *instant*—your soul must quit your body and that you will no longer be a man—and that this is certain, *certain!* that's the point—the certainty of it. Just that instant when you place your head on the block and hear the iron grate over your head—then—*that* quarter of a second is the most awful of all.

This is not my own fantastical opinion—many people have thought the same; but I feel it so deeply that I'll tell you what I think: I believe that to execute a man for murder is to punish him immeasurably more dreadfully than is equivalent to his crime. A murder by sentence is far more dreadful than a murder committed by a criminal. The man who is despatched by burglars at night, or in the gloom of a wood, or anywhere, undoubtedly hopes and hopes that he may yet escape until the very moment of his death. There are plenty of instances of a man running away, or imploring for mercy—at all events hoping on in some degree—even after his throat was cut. But in the case of an execution, that last hope—having which it is so immeasurably less dreadful to die,—is taken away from the wretch and *certainty* substituted in its place! there is his sentence, and with it that terrible certainty that he cannot possibly escape death—which, I consider, must be the most dreadful anguish in the world. Who dares to say that any man should suffer this without going mad? No, no! it is an abuse, a shame,—it is unnecessary—why should such a thing exist? Doubtless there may be men who have been sentenced, who have suffered this mental anguish for a while and then have been reprieved; perhaps such men may have been able to relate their feelings afterwards. Our Lord Christ spoke of this anguish and dread. No! no! no! No man should be treated so, no man, no man!"

The servant, though of course he could not have expressed all this as the prince did, still clearly entered into it and was greatly conciliated—as was evident from the increased amiability of his expression. "If you are really very anxious for a smoke," he remarked, "I think it might possibly be managed, if you are very quick about it. You see they might come out and inquire for you, and you wouldn't be on the spot. You see that door there? go in there and you'll find a little room on the right; you can smoke there, only open the window, because I ought not to allow it really, and—" But there was no time after all.

A young fellow entered the hall at this moment, with a

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bundle of papers in his hand. The footman hastened to help him take off his overcoat. The new arrival glanced at the prince out of the corners of his eyes.

"This gentleman declares, Gavrila Ardalionovitch," began the man, confidentially and almost familiarly, "that he is Prince Muishkin and a relative of Madame Epanchin's; he has just arrived from abroad, with nothing but a bundle by way of luggage—"

The prince did not hear the rest, because at this point the servant continued his communication in a whisper.

Gavrila Ardalionovitch listened attentively, and gazed at the prince with great curiosity; at last he motioned the man aside and stepped hurriedly towards the prince.

"Are you Prince Muishkin?" he asked, with the greatest courtesy and amiability.

He was a remarkably handsome young fellow of some twenty-eight summers, fair and of middle height; he wore a small napoleon, and his face was most intelligent and of great beauty. His smile, in spite of its sweetness, was a little thin, if I may so call it, and showed his teeth a little too evenly; his gaze—though decidedly good-humoured and ingenuous, was a little too inquisitive and intent to be altogether agreeable.

"Probably when he is alone he does not put on that look; and very likely he hardly smiles at all by himself!" thought the prince.

The latter said all he could about himself in a few words, very much the same as he had told the footman and Rogojin before hand.

Gavrila Ardalionovitch meanwhile seemed to be trying to recall something.

"Was it not you, then, who sent a letter a year or less ago—from Switzerland I think it was—to Elizabetha Prokofievna (Mrs. Epanchin)?"

"It was."

"Oh, then, of course they will remember who you are. You wish to see the general? I'll tell him at once—he will be free in a minute; but you—you had better wait in the ante-chamber,—hadn't you? Why, is he here?" he added, severely, to the man.

"I tell you, sir, he wished it himself!"

At this moment the study door opened, and a military man, with a portfolio under his arm, came out talking loudly, and after bidding good-bye to some one inside, took his departure.

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"You here, Gania?" cried a voice from the study, "come in here, will you?"

Gavrila Ardalionovitch nodded to the prince and entered the room hastily.

A couple of minutes later the door opened again and the affable voice of Gania cried:

"Come in please, prince!"

III.

GENERAL Ivan Fedorovitch Epanchin was standing in the middle of the room, and gazed with great curiosity upon the prince as the latter entered; he even advanced a couple of steps to meet him.

The prince came forward and introduced himself.

"Quite so," replied the general, "and what can I do for you?"

"Oh, I have no special business; my principal object was to make your acquaintance. I should not like to disturb you. I do not know your times and arrangements here, you see, but I have only just arrived. I came straight from the station. I am come direct from Switzerland."

The general very nearly smiled, but thought better of it and kept his smile back. Then he reflected, blinked his eyes, stared at his guest once more from head to foot, then abruptly motioned him to a chair, sat down himself and waited with some impatience for the prince to begin.

Gania stood at his table in the far corner of the room and turned over his papers.

"I have not much time for making acquaintances, as a rule," said the general, "but as, of course, you have your object in coming, I—"

"I felt sure you would think I had some object in view when I resolved to pay you this visit," the prince interrupted; "but I give you my word, beyond the pleasure of making your acquaintance I had absolutely no object whatever."

"The pleasure is, of course, mutual; but life is not all pleasure, as you are aware; there is such a thing as business, and I really do not see what possible reason there can be, why we—"

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"Oh, there is no reason, of course, indeed I suppose there is nothing in common between us, or very little; for if I am Prince Muishkin, and your wife happens to be a member of my house, that can hardly be called a 'reason' perhaps; I quite understand that; and yet that was my whole motive for coming. You see I have not been in Russia for four years, and knew very little about the place when I left. I had been very ill for a long time, so that when one comes back one feels the need of a few good friends; in fact, I have a certain question upon which I much need advice, and do not know whom to go to for it. I thought of your family when I was passing through Berlin, 'they are almost relations,' I said to myself, 'so I'll begin with them; perhaps we may get on with each other, I with them and they with me, if they are nice people;' and I have heard that you are very nice people!"

"Oh, thank you, thank you, I'm sure," replied the general, considerably taken aback; "may I ask where you have taken up your quarters?"

"Nowhere, as yet."

"What, straight from the station to my house? and how about your luggage?"

"I only had a small bundle, containing linen, with me, nothing more. I can carry it in my hand, easily; there will be plenty of time to take a room in some hotel by the evening."

"Oh, then you *do* intend to take a room?"

"Of course."

"To judge from your words, you came straight to my house with the intention of staying there."

"That could only have been on your invitation; I confess, however, that I should not have stayed here even if you had invited me, not for any particular reason, but because it is—well, contrary to my practice and nature, somehow."

"Oh, indeed, then it is perhaps as well that I neither *did* invite you, nor *do* invite you now. Excuse me, prince, but we had better make this matter clear, once for all; as we have just agreed that with regard to our relationship there is not a word to be said, though, of course, it would have been very delightful to us to feel that such relationship did actually exist, therefore, perhaps—

"Therefore, perhaps I had better get up and go away?" said the prince, laughing merrily as he rose from his place; just as merrily as though his circumstances were by no means

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strained or difficult in any way; "and I give you my word, general, that though I know nothing whatever of manners and customs of society, and how people live and all that, yet I felt quite sure that this visit of mine would end exactly as it has ended now. Oh, well, I suppose it's all right; especially as my letter was not answered—well—good-bye, forgive me for having disturbed you!"

The prince's expression was so good-natured at this moment, and so entirely free from even a suspicion of unpleasant feeling was the smile with which he looked at the general as he said the above words, that the latter suddenly paused and appeared to gaze at his guest from quite a new point of view; the whole change of view took place in one instant.

"Do you know, prince," he said, in quite a different tone, "I do not know you at all, yet; and after all Elizabetha Prokofievna would very likely be pleased to have a peep at a man of her own name. Wait a little if you don't mind, and if you have time to spare?"

"Oh, bless you—I've lots of time; my time is entirely my own!" and the prince immediately replaced his soft, round hat on the table. "I confess, I thought Elizabetha Prokofievna would very likely remember that I had written her a letter. Just now your servant—outside there—was dreadfully suspicious that I had come to beg of you, I noticed that! probably he has very strict instructions on that score; but I assure you I did not come for that. I came to make some friends. I am rather bothered at having disturbed you, that's all I care about."

"Look here, prince," said the general, with a cordial smile, "if you really are the sort of man you appear to be, it may be a source of great pleasure to us to make your better acquaintance; but, you see, I am a very busy man, and have to be perpetually sitting here and signing papers, or off to see his excellence, or to my department, or somewhere; so that though I should be glad to see more of people, nice people—you see, I —however, I am sure you are so well brought up that you will see at once, and—but how old are you, prince?"

"Twenty-six."

"No? I thought you very much younger."

"Yes, they say I have a 'young' face. As to disturbing you I shall soon learn to avoid doing that, for I hate disturbing people; besides, you and I are so differently constituted, I

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should think, that there must be very little in common between us; not that I will ever believe there is *nothing* in common between any two people, as some declare is the case; I am sure people make a great mistake in sorting each other into groups, by appearances; but I am boring you, I see, you—"

"Just two words: have you any means at all? Or perhaps you may be intending to undertake some sort of employment? Excuse my questioning you, but—"

"Oh, my dear sir, I esteem and understand your kindness in putting the question. No; at present I have no means whatever, and no employment either, but I hope to find some. I was living on other people abroad; one Schneider, the professor who treated me and taught me too, in Switzerland, gave me money for my journey, and gave me just enough, so that now I have but a few copecks left. There certainly is one question upon which I am anxious to have advice, but—"

"Tell me, how do you intend to live now, and what are your ultimate intentions?" interrupted the general.

"I wish to work, somehow or other."

"Oh yes, but then, you see, you are too much of a philosopher. Have you any talents, or ability in any direction—that is, any that would bring in money and bread? excuse me again—"

"Oh, don't apologize. No, I don't think I have either talents or special abilities of any kind; on the contrary, I have always been an invalid and unable to learn much. As for bread, I should think—"

The general interrupted once more with questions; while the prince again replied with the narrative we have heard before. It appeared that the general had known Pavlicheff; but why the latter had taken an interest in the prince, that young gentleman could not explain; probably by virtue of the old friendship with his father, he thought.

The prince had been left an orphan when quite a little child, and Pavlicheff had entrusted him to an old lady, a relative of his own, living in the country, the child needing the fresh air and exercise of country life. He was educated, first by a governess, and afterwards by a tutor, but could not remember much about this time of his life. His fits were so frequent then, that they made almost an idiot of him (the prince used the expression "idiot" himself). Pavlicheff had met Professor Schneider in Berlin, and the latter had persuaded him to send

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the boy to Switzerland, to Schneider's establishment there, for the cure of his epilepsy, and, five years before this time, the prince was sent off; but Pavlicheff had died two or three years since, and Schneider had himself supported the young fellow, from that day to this, at his own expense; although he had not quite cured him, he had greatly improved his condition; and now, at last, at the prince's own desire, and because of a certain matter which came to the ears of the latter, Schneider had despatched the young man to Russia.

The general was much astonished.

"Then you have no one, absolutely *no* one in Russia?" he asked.

"No one, at present; but I hope to make friends; and then I have a letter from—"

"At all events," put in the general, not listening to the news about the letter, "at all events, you must have learned *something*, and your malady would not prevent your undertaking some easy work, in one of the departments, for instance?"

"Oh dear no, oh no! as for a situation, I should much like to find one, for I am anxious to discover what I really am fit for. I have learned a good deal in the last four years, and, besides, I read a great many Russian books."

"Russian books, indeed? then, of course, you can read and write quite correctly?"

"Oh dear yes!"

"Capital; and your hand-writing?"

"Ah, there I am *really* talented! I may say I am a real caligraphist. Let me write you something, just to show you," said the prince, with some show of excitement.

"With pleasure! in fact, it is very expedient; I like your readiness, prince; in fact, I must say—I—I—like you very well, altogether," said the general.

"What delightful writing materials you have here, such a lot of pencils and things, and what beautiful paper—it's a charming room altogether— I know that picture, it's a Swiss view. I'm sure the artist painted it from nature, and that I have seen the very place—"

"Quite likely, though I bought it here. Gania, give the prince some paper, here are pens and paper, now then, here, take this table. What's this?" the general continued to Gania, who had that moment taken a large photograph out of his portfolio, and shown it to his senior. "Holloa! Nastasia

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Philipovna! did she send it you herself, did she? herself!" he inquired, with much curiosity and great animation.

"Yes, she gave it me just now, when I called in to congratulate her; I asked her for it long ago. I don't know whether she meant it for a hint that I had come empty-handed, without a present for her birthday, or what," added Gania, with an unpleasant smile.

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense," said the general, with decision; "what extraordinary ideas you have, Gania, as if she would hint, that's not her way at all. Besides, what could *you* give her, you must have thousands at your disposal for that sort of thing. You might have given her your portrait, however; has she ever asked you for it?"

"No, not yet. Very likely she never will. I suppose you haven't forgotten about to-night, have you, Ivan Fedorovitch? you were one of those specially invited, you know."

"Oh, no, I remember all right, and I shall go, of course, I should think so! she's twenty-five years old to-day. And, you know, Gania, you must be ready for great things; she has promised both myself and Afanassy Ivanitch that she will give a decided answer to-night, yes or no. So look out, you know."

Gania suddenly became so ill at ease that his face grew paler than ever.

"Are you sure she said that?" he asked, and his voice seemed to quiver as he spoke.

"Yes, she promised me that long ago. We both worried her so that she gave in; but she wished us to tell you nothing about it until the day."

The general watched Gania's confusion intently, and clearly did not like it.

"Remember, Ivan Fedorovitch," said Gania, in great agitation, "that I was to be free too, until her decision; and that even then I was to have my 'yes or no' free."

"Why—don't you—aren't you—" began the general, in wild alarm.

"Oh, I shall be all right—"

"But, my dear fellow, what are you doing, what do you mean?"

"Oh, I'm not rejecting her; I may have expressed myself badly, but I didn't mean that."

"Reject her; I should think not," said the general, with annoyance, and apparently not in the least anxious to conceal his annoyance. "Why, my dear fellow, it's not a question of

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your rejecting her, it is whether you are prepared to receive her consent joyfully, and with proper satisfaction. What's going on at your house?"

"At home? oh, I can do as I like there, of course; only my father will make a fool of himself as usual; but then he is rapidly becoming a general nuisance. I don't even talk to him now, but I hold him in a vice, I have him safe enough; and I swear if it had not been for my mother, I should have shown him the way out of the door, long ago. My mother is always crying, of course, and my sister sulks; I had to tell them at last that I intended to be master of my own destiny, and that I expect to be obeyed at home. At least, I gave my sister to understand as much, and my mother was present."

"Well, I must say, I cannot understand it!" said the general, shrugging his shoulders and dropping his hands; "you remember your mother Nina Alexandrovna, that day she came and sat here and groaned—don't you remember?—and when I asked her what was the matter, she says, 'Oh, its such a *dishonour* to us!' Dishonour! stuff and nonsense! I should like to know who can reproach Nastasia Philipovna, or who can say a word of any kind against her. Did she mean because Nastasia had been living at Totski's house? What nonsense it is! 'You must not let her come near my daughter,' says Nina Alexandrovna. Pooh, bosh! I don't understand it."

The prince heard the whole of the foregoing conversation, as he sat at the table writing out his exercise. He finished at last, and brought the result of his labour to the general's desk.

"So this is Nastasia Philipovna," he said, looking attentively and curiously at the portrait; "how wonderfully beautiful!" he immediately added, with warmth. The picture was certainly that of an unusually lovely woman. She was photographed in a black silk dress of simple design, her hair was evidently dark and plainly arranged, her eyes were of deep blue, her forehead thoughtful, the expression on her face was passionate, but noble-looking. She was rather thin about the face, perhaps, and a little pale. Both Gania and the general gazed at the prince in amazement.

"How do you know it's Nastasia Philipovna?" asked the general; "you surely don't know *her* already, do you?"

"Yes, I do! I have only been one day in Russia, but I have heard of the great beauty!" and the prince proceeded to narrate his meeting with Rogojin in the train and the whole of the latter's story.

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"There's news!" said the general in some excitement, after listening to the story with engrossed attention.

"Oh, of course it's nothing but humbug!" cried Gania, a little disturbed, however, "it's all humbug; the young merchant is pleased to indulge in a little innocent recreation! I have heard something of Rogojin!"

"Yes, so have I!" replied the general; "Nastasia Philipovna told us all about the earrings that very day; but *now* it is quite a different matter. You see the fellow really has a million of roubles, and he is passionately in love; the whole story smells of passion, and we all know what this class of gentry is capable of in their rowdy moments. I am much afraid of some disagreeable scandal, I am indeed!"

"You are afraid of the million, I suppose," said Gania, grinning and showing his teeth.

"And you are *not*, I presume, eh!"

"How did he strike you, prince?" asked Gania, suddenly, "did the fellow seem to be a serious sort of a man, or just a common rowdy lad? What was your own opinion about the matter?"

When Gania put this question, a new idea had suddenly flashed into his brain, and blazed out, impatiently, in his eyes. The general, who was really agitated and disturbed, looked over at the prince too, but did not seem to expect much of the latter's reply.

"I really don't quite know how to tell you," replied the prince, "but it certainly did seem to me that the man was full of passion, and not perhaps quite healthy passion. He seemed to be still far from well. Very likely he will be in bed again in a day or two, especially if he lives fast."

"No! do you think so?" said the general, catching at the idea.

"Yes, I do think so!"

"Yes, but the sort of scandals I referred to may happen at any moment, it need not be after some days at all, it may be this very evening," remarked Gania to the general, with a smile.

"Then, of course, quite so, in that case it all depends upon what is going on in her brain at this moment."

"You know the kind of person she is at times."

"How? what kind of person is she?" cried the general, arrived at the limits of his patience; "look here, Gania, don't you go annoying her to-night, what you are to do is to be as agreeable towards her as ever you can. Well, what are

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you smiling at? You must understand, Gania, that I have no interest whatever in speaking like this, and bothering myself about the matter at all, and if I *do* wish anything on her behalf, you must see that it can only be for your sake alone. You are a sensible fellow, and I have had great hopes for you in this matter; so that now, when you, when you—"

"Yes, that's the chief thing," said Gania, helping the general out of his difficulties again, and curling his lips in an envenomed smile, which he did not attempt to conceal. He gazed with his fevered eyes straight into those of the general, as though he were anxious that the latter might read his thoughts.

The general grew livid and flared up.

"Yes, of course it is the principal thing!" he cried, looking angrily back at Gania; "and what a very curious man you are, Gania; you actually seem to be *glad* to hear of this millionaire fellow's arrival—just as though you wished for an excuse to get out of the whole thing. Do you understand me now? I wish to know whether you desire this arrangement or whether you do not? if not, say so,—and—and welcome! No one is trying to force you into the snare, Gavrila Ardalionovitch, if you see a snare in the matter, at least."

"I do wish it," murmured Gania, softly but firmly, lowering his eyes; and he relapsed into gloomy silence.

The general was satisfied; he had excited himself, and was evidently now regretting that he had gone so far. He turned to the prince, and suddenly the disagreeable thought of the latter's presence struck him, and the certainty that he must have heard every word of the conversation. But he felt at ease in another moment; it only needed one glance at the prince to see that in that quarter there was nothing to fear.

"Oh!" cried the general, catching sight of the prince's specimen of caligraphy, which the latter had now handed him for inspection. "Why, this is simply beautiful; look at that, Gania, there's real talent there!"

On a sheet of thick writing paper the prince had written in old-fashioned characters the legend:

"The gentle Abbot Pafnute signed this."

"There," explained the prince, with great delight and animation, "there, that's the Abbot's real signature—from a manuscript of the 14th century. All these old Abbots and Metropolitans used to write most beautifully, and with such taste and with so much care and diligence. Then here are some smaller examples; here are the round large French characters of the last century; then here's a handsome type, original too;

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that's a Russian scribe's round hand, all letters to important personages are written in these characters; then here's the common upright English hand, here's a variation in that; and here's French again, I got it from a commercial traveller abroad; it is very like the English, but has rather darker lines. This is a beautiful type, and if only done with taste, it is exquisite. It's a thing to fall in love with."

"Dear me! how you have gone into all the refinements and details of the question. Why, my dear fellow, you are not a caligraphist, you are simply an artist! Eh, Gania?"

"Wonderful!" said Gania, "and he knows it too," he added, with an ironical smile.

"Laugh away, laugh away—but there's a career in this," said the general. "You don't know what a great personage I shall show this to, prince. Why, you can command a situation at thirty-five roubles per month to start off with. However, it's half-past twelve," he concluded, looking at his watch; "so to business, prince, for I must be setting to work and shall not see you again to-day. Sit down a minute; I have told you that I cannot receive you myself very often, but I should like to be of some assistance to you, some small assistance, of a kind that would give you satisfaction; I shall find you a place in one of the State departments, an easy place—but you will require to be accurate. Now, as for your plans—in the house, or rather in the family of Gania here—my young friend, whom I hope you will know better—his mother and sister have prepared two or three rooms for lodgers, and let them to highly recommended young fellows with board and service. I am sure Nina Alexandrovna will kindly take you in on my recommendation; there you will be comfortable and well taken care of; for I do not think, prince, that you are the sort of man to be allowed to live at the mercy of Fate in a town like Petersburg, at first. Nina Alexandrovna, Gania's mother, and Varvara Alexandrovna are ladies for whom I have the highest possible esteem and respect. Nina Alexandrovna is the wife of General Ardalion Alexandrovitch, my old brother in arms, with whom, I regret to say, on account of certain circumstances, I am no longer acquainted; I give you all this information, prince, in order to make it clear to you that I am personally recommending you to this family, and that in so doing, I am more or less taking upon myself to answer for you.

"The terms are most reasonable, and I trust that your salary will very shortly prove amply sufficient for your expenditure.

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Of course pocket-money is a necessity, if only a little; do not be angry, prince, if I strongly recommend you to avoid carrying money in your pocket. But as your purse is quite empty at the present moment, you must allow me to press these twenty-five roubles upon your acceptance, as something to begin upon. Of course we will settle this little matter another time, and if you are the upright honest fellow you look, I anticipate very little trouble between us on that score. Taking so much interest in you as you may perceive I do, I am not without my object, and you shall know it in good time; you see, I am perfectly candid with you. I hope, Gania, you have nothing to say against the prince's taking up his abode in your house?"

"Oh, on the contrary, and mother will be very glad," said Gania, courteously and kindly.

"I think only one of your rooms is engaged as yet, is it not? that fellow Ferd—Ferd—"

"Ferdishenko."

"Yes—I don't like that Ferdishenko. I can't understand why Nastasia Philipovna encourages him so. Is he really her cousin, as he says?"

"Oh dear no, it's all a joke. No more cousin than I am."

"Well, and what do you think of the arrangement, prince?"

"Thank you, general; you have behaved very kindly to me; all the more so since I did not ask you to help me. I don't say that out of pride; I certainly did not know where to lay my head to-night; Rogojin asked me to come to his house, of course, but—"

"Rogojin? no, no, my good fellow; I should strongly recommend you, paternally,—or if you prefer it as a friend,—to forget all about Rogojin, and, in fact, to stick to the family into which you are about to enter."

"Thank you," began the prince; "and since you are so very kind there is just one matter which I—"

"You must really excuse me," interrupted the general, "but I positively haven't another moment now. I shall just tell Elizabetha Prokofievna about you, and if she wishes to receive you at once—as I shall advise her—I strongly recommend you to ingratiate yourself with her at the first opportunity, for my wife may be of the greatest service to you in many ways. If she cannot receive you now, then you must be content to wait for another opportunity. Meanwhile you, Gania, just look

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over these accounts, will you? We mustn't forget to finish off that matter—"

The general left the room, and the prince never succeeded in broaching the business which he had on hand, though he had endeavoured to do so four times.

Gania lighted a cigarette and offered one to the prince; the latter accepted the offer, but did not talk, being unwilling to disturb Gania's work. He commenced to examine the study and its contents; but Gania hardly so much as glanced at the papers lying before him; he was absent and thoughtful, and his smile and general appearance struck the prince still more disagreeably than before when the two were left alone together.

Suddenly Gania approached our hero who was at the moment standing over Nastasia Philipovna's portrait, examining it.

"Do you admire that sort of woman, prince?" he asked, looking intently at him. He seemed to have some special object in the question.

"It's a wonderful face," said the prince, "and I feel sure that her destiny is not by any means an ordinary, uneventful one. Her face is merry enough, but she must have suffered terribly—hasn't she? Her eyes reveal that fact—those two little bones there, the little points under her eyes, just where the cheek begins. It's a proud face too, terribly proud! and I—I can't say whether she is good and kind, or not. Oh, if she be but good, if she be but good! all might be well."

"And would *you* marry a woman like that, now?" continued Gania, never taking his excited eyes off the prince's face.

"I cannot marry at all," said the latter, "I am an invalid."

"Would Rogojin marry her, do you think?"

"Why not? certainly he would, I should think; he would marry her to-morrow!—marry her to-morrow and murder her in a week!"

Hardly had the prince uttered the last word when Gania gave such a fearful shudder that the prince almost cried out.

"What's the matter," said he, seizing Gania's hand.

"Your highness! His excellence begs your presence in her excellence's apartments!" announced the footman, appearing at the door.

The prince immediately followed the man out of the room.

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IV.

ALL three of the Miss Epanchins were fine, healthy, blooming girls, well-grown and with grand shoulders and busts, with strong—almost masculine—hands; and, of course, with all the above attributes, they enjoyed capital appetites, of which they were not in the least ashamed.

Elizabetha Prokofievna, their mother, sometimes informed the girls that they were a little too candid in this matter, but in spite of their outward deference to their mother these three young women, in solemn conclave, had long agreed to modify the unquestioning obedience which they had been in the habit of according to her; and Mrs. General Epanchin had judged it better to say nothing about it, though, of course, she was well aware of the fact.

It is true that her nature sometimes rebelled against these dictates of deliberate reason, and Elizabetha Prokofievna grew yearly more capricious and impatient; but having a respectful and well-disciplined husband under her thumb at all times, she found it possible, as a rule, to empty any little accumulations of spleen upon his head, and therefore the harmony of the family was kept duly balanced, and things went as smoothly as family matters can.

Mrs. General had a fair appetite herself, and generally took her share of the capital mid-day lunch which was always served for the girls, and which was nearly as good as a dinner. The young ladies used to have a cup of coffee each before this meal, at ten o'clock, while still in bed. This was a favourite and unalterable arrangement with them. At half past twelve, the table was laid in the small dining-room, and occasionally the general himself appeared at the family gathering if he had time.

Besides tea and coffee, cheese, honey, butter, pan-cakes of various kinds (the lady of the house loved these best), cutlets, and so on, there was generally strong beef soup, and other substantial delicacies.

On the particular morning on which our story has opened, the family had assembled in the dining-room, and were waiting the general's appearance, the latter having promised to come this day. If he had been one second later, he would have been sent for at once; but he turned up punctually.

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As he came forward to wish his wife good-morning and kiss her hands, as his custom was, he observed a something in her look which boded ill; he thought he knew the reason, and had expected this, but still he was not altogether comfortable. His daughters advanced to kiss him too, and though they did not look exactly angry, there was something strange in their expression as well.

The general was, thanks to certain circumstances, a little inclined to be too suspicious at home, and needlessly nervous; but, as an experienced father and husband, he judged it better to take measures at once to protect himself from any dangers there might be in the air.

However, I hope I shall not interfere with the proper sequence of my narrative too much, if I diverge for a moment at this point, in order to clear up and explain the circumstances and mutual relations between General Epanchin's family and others acting a part in this history, at the time when we take up the thread of their destiny. I have already stated that the general, though he was a man of lowly origin, and of poor education, was, for all that, an experienced and talented husband and father.

Among other opinions, he considered it undesirable to hurry his daughters to the matrimonial altar, and to worry them too much with assurances of his paternal wishes for their happiness, as is the custom among parents of many grown-up daughters. He even succeeded in ranging his wife on his side on this question, though he found the feat very difficult to accomplish, difficult because unnatural; but the general's arguments were conclusive, and founded upon patent facts. The general considered that the girls' taste and good sense should be allowed to develop and mature deliberately, and that the parent's duty should merely be to keep watch, in order that no strange or undesirable choice be made; but that the selection once effected, both father and mother were bound from that moment to enter heart and soul into the cause, and see that the matter did not pause again until the altar should be happily reached.

Besides this, it was so clear that the Epanchins' position gained each year, with geometrical accuracy, both as to solidity and social weight; and, therefore, the longer the girls waited, the better was their chance of making a brilliant match.

But again, amidst the incontrovertible facts just recorded, one more, equally significant, rose up to confront the family;

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and this was, that the eldest daughter, Alexandra, imperceptibly arrived at her twenty-fifth birthday. Almost at the same moment, Afanassy Ivanovitch Totski, a man of immense wealth, high connections, and good standing, announced his renewed intention of marrying. Afanassy Ivanovitch was a gentleman of fifty-five years of age, of graceful mental gifts, and of most refined tastes and culture. He wished to marry well, and, moreover, he was a known admirer and judge of beauty.

Now, since Totski had, of late, lived upon terms of great cordiality with Epanchin, which excellent relations were intensified by the fact that they were, so to speak, partners in several financial enterprises, it so happened that the former now put in a friendly request to the general for brotherly counsel and direction as to the important step he meditated. Might he suggest, for instance, such a thing as a marriage between himself and one of the general's daughters?

Evidently the quiet, pleasant current of the family life of the Epanchins was about to undergo a change.

The undoubted beauty of the family, *par excellence*, was the youngest, Aglaya, as aforesaid. But Totski himself, though an egotist of the extremest type, realised that he had no chance there; Aglaya was clearly not for such as he.

Perhaps the sisterly love and friendship of the three girls had more or less exaggerated Aglaya's chances of happiness; but, in their opinion, the latter's destiny was not merely to be very happy, she was to live in a heaven on earth. Aglaya's husband was to be a compendium of all the virtues, and of all success, not to speak of fabulous wealth. The two elder sisters had agreed that all was to be sacrificed by them, if need be, for Aglaya's aggrandisement; her dowry was to be colossal and unprecedented.

The general and his wife were aware of this agreement, and, therefore, when Totski suggested himself for one of the sisters, the parents made no doubt that one of the two elder girls would probably accept the offer, since Totski would certainly make no difficulty as to dowry. The general valued Totski's offer, very highly; he knew life, and realised what such an offer meant.

The answer of the sisters to the communication was, if not conclusive, at least consoling and hopeful; it made known that the eldest, Alexandra, would very likely be disposed to listen to a proposal.

Alexandra was a good girl, though perhaps a little disposed

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to be fractious; but she was intelligent and kind-hearted, and, if she were to marry Totski, she would make him a good wife. She did not care for a brilliant marriage; she was eminently a woman calculated to soothe and sweeten the life of any man. She was decidedly pretty, if not absolutely striking. What better could Totski wish?

So the matter crept slowly forward. The general and Totski had agreed to avoid any hasty and irrevocable step; Alexandra's parents had not even begun to talk to the daughters freely upon the subject, when suddenly, as it were, a dissonant chord was struck amid the harmony of the proceedings. Mrs. Epanchin began to show signs of discontent, and that was a serious matter. A certain circumstance had crept in, a disagreeable and worrisome little fact, which threatened to overturn the whole business.

This same fact had started into existence eighteen years since. Close to an estate of Totski's, in one of the central governments of Russia, there lived, at that time, a poor gentleman whose estate was of the wretchedest description as to size and wealth. This gentleman was historical in the district for his persistent ill-fortune; his name was Barashkoff, a man who, as regards family and descent, was vastly superior to Totski, but whose estate was mortaged and pawned to the last acre. One fine day, when he had ridden over to the town to see a creditor, the chief peasant of his village followed him shortly after, with white face, and dishevelled hair, with the news that his house was burnt down, and that his wife was unfortunately burnt with it, but that his children were safe.

Even Barashkoff, inured to the storms of evil fortune as he was, could not stand this last stroke. He went mad and died shortly after in the town hospital. His estate was sold for the creditors; and the little girls—two of them, of seven and eight years of age respectively, were—adopted by Totski, who undertook their maintenance and education in the kindness of his heart. They were brought up together with the children of his German bailiff. Very soon, however, there was only one of them left—Nastasia Philipovna, for the other little one died of whooping cough. Totski, who was living abroad at this time, very soon forgot all about the child; but five years after, returning to Russia, it struck him that he would like to look in at his estate and see how matters were going there, and, arrived at his bailiff's house, he was not long in discovering that among the children of the latter there now dwelt a most lovely little girl of twelve, sweet, and intelligent, and bright, and promising

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to develop beauty of most unusual quality—as to which last Totski was an undoubted authority.

He only stayed at his country seat a few days on this occasion, but he had time to make his arrangements. Great changes were made in the child's education; a good governess was engaged, a Swiss lady of experience and learning. For four years this good lady resided in the house with little Nastia, and then the education was considered complete; the governess took her departure and another lady came down to fetch Nastia, by Totski's instructions. The child was now transported to another of Totski's estates in a distant part of the country. Here she found a delightful little house, just built, and prepared for her reception with great care and taste; and here she took up her abode together with the lady who had accompanied her from her old home. In the house there were musical instruments of all sorts, a charming "young lady's library," pictures, paint boxes, and everything to make life agreeable.

Two months later Totski himself arrived. From that time he appeared to have taken a great fancy to this part of the world and came down each summer, staying two and three months at a time, and so passed four years peacefully, and happily, and tastefully and elegantly too!

At the end of that time, and about four months after Totski's last visit (he had stayed but a fortnight on this occasion), a report reached Nastasia Philipovna that Totski was about to be married in St. Petersburg, to a rich, eminent, and lovely woman of rank. The report was only partially true, the marriage project being only in an embryo condition; but a great change now came over the destiny of Nastasia Philipovna; she suddenly displayed unusual decision and character; without wasting time in thought she left her country home and came up to St. Petersburg, straight to Totski's house, all alone.

The latter, amazed at her conduct, began to express his displeasure; but he very soon became aware that he must change his voice, style, and subject-matter, and every thing else, with this young lady; the good old times were gone. An entirely new and different woman sat before him, between whom and the girl he had left in the country last July there was nothing in common.

In the first place, this new woman understood a good deal more than was usual for young people of her age; so much indeed, that Totski could not help wondering where she had picked up her knowledge, surely not from her "young lady's library?" Her knowldge even embraced

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legal matters, and "the world" in general, to a considerable extent.

Her character was absolutely changed—it was an entirely new and hitherto unknown being who now sat and laughed at him there, and informed him to his face that she had never had the faintest feeling for him of any kind, except loathing and contempt—contempt which had followed closely upon her first sensation of surprise and bewilderment after her earliest acquaintance with him.

This new woman gave him further to understand that though it was absolutely the same to her whom he married, yet she had decided to prevent this marriage—for no particular reason, but that she *chose* to do so, and because she wished to have a good laugh at him, for that it was "quite her turn to laugh a little now!"

Such were her words,—very likely she did not give her real reason for this eccentric conduct; but, at all events, that was all the explanation she deigned to give.

Meanwhile, Totski thought the matter over as well as his scattered ideas would permit him. His meditations lasted a fortnight, however, and at the end of that time his resolution was taken. The fact was, Totski was at that time a man of fifty years of age; his position was solid and respectable; his place in society had long been taken and was firmly fixed upon safe foundations; he loved himself, his personal comforts, and his position better than all the world, as every respectable gentleman should!

At the same time his grasp of things in general soon showed Totski that he now had to deal with a being who was outside the pale of the ordinary rules of traditional behaviour, and who would not only threaten mischief but would undoubtedly carry it out, and stop for no one.

There was evidently, he concluded, something at work here; some storm of the mind, paroxysm of romantic irritation, goodness knows against whom or what, some insatiable contempt, in a word—something altogether absurd and impossible, but at the same time most dangerous to be met with by any respectable person with a position in society to keep up.

For a man of Totski's wealth and connection it would, of course, have been the simplest possible matter to take some step which would rid him at once from all annoyance; while it was evidently impossible for Nastasia Philipovna to harm him in any way, either legally or by means of stirring up a

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scandal, for, in case of the latter danger, he could so easily remove her to a sphere of safety. However, these arguments would only hold good in case of Nastasia acting as others would in such an emergency, and, in case she did not overstep the bounds of reasonable conduct by some extraordinary eccentricity.

But now the sound judgment of Totski stood him in good stead. He realised that Nastasia Philipovna must be well aware that she could do nothing by legal means to injure him; but that her flashing eyes betrayed some entirely different intention.

Nastasia Philipovna was quite capable of ruining herself and even perpetrating something which would send her to Siberia and hard labour for the pleasure of injuring a man for whom she had developed so inhuman a sense of loathing and contempt.

Totski made no attempt to conceal the fact that he was a coward in some respects. For instance, if he had been told that he would be stabbed at the altar, or publicly insulted, he would undoubtedly have been frightened; but not so much at the idea of being murdered, or wounded, or insulted, as with the thought that if such things were to happen he would be made to look ridiculous in the eyes of society.

He knew well that Nastasia thoroughly understood him and where to wound him and *how*; and therefore, as the marriage was still only in embryo, Totski decided to conciliate Nastasia Philipovna by "knuckling under." It had struck Totski as long ago as last spring that he ought to be finding a good match for Nastasia, for instance, some respectable and reasonable young fellow serving in a government office in another part of the country (how Nastasia laughed at the idea of such a thing, now).

However, it appeared to Totski that he might have another try in this direction; and he determined to establish Nastasia Philipovna in St. Petersburg, surrounding her with all the comforts and elegancies that his wealth could command; in all probability that some one would be attracted.

Five years of this Petersburg life went by, and, of course, during that time a great deal happened. Totski's position was very uncomfortable; having "funked" once, he could not make up his mind to be totally at his ease. He was afraid, he did not know why, but he was simply *afraid* of Nastasia Philipovna.

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For the first two years or so he had suspected that she wanted to marry him herself, and that only her vanity prevented her telling him so, she preferred him to approach her with a humble proposal from his own side. But to his great, and not entirely pleasurable amazement, he discovered that this was by no means the case, and that were he to offer himself he would be refused. He could not understand such a state of things and was obliged to conclude that it was pride, the pride of an injured and imaginative woman, which had gone to such lengths that it preferred to sit and nurse its contempt and hatred in solitude rather than go forth to heights of hitherto unattainable splendour.

Then Totski took cunning means to break his chains and be free. He tried to tempt her in various forms to lose her heart; he invited princes, hussars, secretaries of embassies, poets, novelists, even journalists, to see her; but not one of them all made the faintest impression upon Nastasia's heart. It was as though she had a pebble in place of a heart, and as if her feelings and affections were dried up and withered for ever.

She lived almost entirely alone; she read, she learned, she loved music. Her principal acquaintances were poor women of various grades, a couple of actresses, and the family of a poor school teacher. Among these people she was much beloved.

She received four or five friends sometimes, of an evening; Totski often came. Lately, too, General Epanchin had been enabled with great difficulty to introduce himself into her circle; Gania made her acquaintance also. In fact, Nastasia Philipovna's beauty became a thing known to all the town; but not a single man could boast of anything more than his own admiration for her; and this reputation of hers, and her wit and culture and grace, all this confirmed Mr. Totski in the plan he had now prepared.

And here we are at the moment of time when General Epanchin began to take so large and important a share in this history.

When Totski had approached the general with his amiable request for friendly counsel as to a marriage with one of Epanchin's daughters, the former had made a full and candid admission. He had said that he intended to stop at no means to obtain his freedom, even if Nastasia were to promise to leave him entirely alone in future, he would not (he said) believe and trust her; words were not enough for him; he must have solid

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guarantees of some sort. So he and the general determined to try what an attempt to appeal to her heart would effect. Having arrived at Nastasia's house one day, with Epanchin, Totski immediately began to tell her of the intolerable torment of his position. He admitted that he was to blame for all, and candidly confessed that he could not bring himself to feel any remorse for his original guilt towards herself because he was a man of sensual passions which were inborn and ineradicable and that he had no power over himself in this respect, but that he wished, seriously, to marry at last and declared that the whole fate of the most desirable social union which he contemplated, was in her hands; in a word, he confided his all to her generosity of heart.

General Epanchin took up his part and spoke in the character of father of a family; he spoke sensibly and without wasting words over any attempt to touch her heart, he merely recorded his full admission that he considered she (Nastasia) had every right in the world to be the arbiter of Totski's destiny at this moment. He then pointed out that the fate of his daughter, and very likely of both his other daughters besides, now hung, more or less, upon her reply.

To Nastasia's question as to what they wished her to do, Totski confessed that he had been so frightened by her, five years ago, that he could never now be entirely comfortable until Nastasia herself married. He immediately added that such a suggestion from him would, of course, be absurd unless accompanied by remarks of a more pointed nature. He very well knew, he said, that a certain young gentleman of good family, namely, Gavrila Ardalionovitch Ivolgin, with whom she was acquainted and whom she received at her house, had long loved her with all the passion of his heart, and would give half his life for some regard from her side. The young fellow had confessed this love of his to him (Totski) and had also admitted the sweet truth in the hearing of his benefactor, General Epanchin. Lastly, he could not help being of opinion that Nastasia must be aware of Gania's love for her, and if he (Totski) mistook not, she had looked with some favour upon it. Having remarked how difficult it was for him, of all people, to speak to her of these matters, Totski concluded by saying that he trusted Nastasia Philipovna would not look with contempt upon him if he now expressed his sincere desire to guarantee her future by a gift of seventy-five thousand roubles. He added that the sum would have been left her all the same in his will, and that

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therefore she must not consider the gift as in any way an indemnification to her for—anything, and that there was no reason, after all, why a man should not be allowed to entertain a natural desire to lighten his conscience, etc., etc., in fact, all that would naturally be said under the circumstances. Totski was very eloquent all through, and, in conclusion, just touched on the fact that not a soul in the world, not even General Epanchin, had ever heard a word about the above seventy-five thousand roubles, and that this was the first time he had ever given expression to his intentions in respect to these monies.

Nastasia Philipovna's reply to this long rigmarole astonished both the old fellows considerably.

Not only was there no trace of her former irony, of her old hatred and enmity, and of that dreadful laughter of the former occasion, the very recollection of which sent a cold chill down Totski's back to this very day; but she seemed charmed and really glad to have the opportunity of talking seriously and friendly with him for once in a way. She confessed that she had long wished to have a frank and free conversation and to ask the friendly advice of her present audience, but that pride had hitherto prevented her; now, however, that the ice was broken, nothing could be more welcome to her than this opportunity.

First with a sad smile, and then with a twinkle of merriment in her eyes, she admitted that such a storm as she had stirred up five years ago was now quite out of the question, she said she had long since changed her views of things, and recognised that facts must be taken into consideration in spite of the opinions or feelings of the heart; what was done was done and ended, and she could not understand why Mr. Totski should still feel alarmed.

She next turned to General Epanchin and observed, most courteously, that she had long since heard of his daughters, and that she had heard none but good report; that she had long learned to think of the young ladies with deep and sincere respect. The idea alone that she could in any way serve them, would be to her both a pride and a source of real happiness.

It was true that she was lonely in her present life; Mr. Totski had judged her thoughts aright; she longed to rise, if not to love, at least to family life and new hopes and objects, but that as to Gavrila Ardalionovitch, she could not as yet say much. She thought it must be the case that he loved her;

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she felt that she too might learn to love him, if she could be sure of the firmness of his attachment to herself, but he was very young, it was a difficult question to decide. What she specially liked about him was that he *worked*, and supported his family by his toil.

She had heard that he was proud and ambitious; she had heard much that was charming of his mother and sister; she had heard of them from Mr. Ptitsin, and would much like to make their acquaintance, but—another question!—would they like to receive her in their house? At all events, though she did not reject the idea of this marriage, she desired not to be hurried. As for the seventy-five thousand roubles, Mr. Totski need not have found any difficulty or awkwardness about the matter; she quite understood the value of money, and would of course accept the gift. She thanked him for his delicacy, however, but would it not be better to let Gavrila Ardalionovitch know of this money before hand?

She would not marry the latter, she said, until she felt persuaded that neither on his part nor on the part of his family did there exist any sort of concealed idea or opinion as to herself. She did not intend to ask forgiveness of anything in the past, which fact she desired to be known. She did not consider herself to blame for anything that had happened in former years, and she thought that Gavrila Ardalionovitch should be informed as to the innocent relations which had existed between herself and Totski during the last five years; that if she accepted this money it was not to be considered as indemnification for her shame as a young girl, which had not been in any degree her own fault, but merely as consolation for the rebuffs of fortune.

She became so excited and agitated during all these explanations and confessions that General Epanchin was highly gratified, and considered the matter satisfactorily arranged once for all. But the once bitten Totski was twice shy, and looked for hidden snakes among the flowers. The special point upon which the two friends particularly trusted in order to bring about their own little object, namely Gania's marriage to Nastasia Philipovna, stood out more and more into prominence; the *pourparlers* had commenced, and gradually even Totski began to believe in the possibility of success.

At the same time Nastasia and Gania had talked the matter over; very little was said—her modesty seemed to suffer under

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the infliction of discussing such a question, but she allowed his love on the understanding that she bound herself to nothing whatever, and that she reserved the right to say "no" up to the very hour of the marriage ceremony; Gania was to have the same right of refusal at the last moment.

It soon became clear to Gania, by scenes of wrath and quarrellings at the domestic hearth, that his family were seriously opposed to the match, and that Nastasia was aware of this fact was equally evident: she said nothing about it herself but he daily expected her to do so.

There were several rumours afloat, before long, which upset Toski's equanimity a good deal, but we will not now stop to describe them; merely mentioning an instance or two;—one was that Nastasia had entered into close and secret relations with the Epanchin girls—a most unlikely rumour; another was that Nastasia Philipovna had long satisfied herself of the fact that Gania was merely marrying her for money, and that his nature was gloomy, and greedy, and impatient, and selfish to an extraordinary degree; and that although he had been keen enough in his desire to achieve a conquest of Nastasia before, yet since the two friends had agreed upon the necessity of buying up Gania by the sale to him of Nastasia Philipovna, it was clear enough that he had begun to consider the whole thing a nuisance and a nightmare.

In his heart passion and hate seemed to hold divided sway, and although he had at last given his consent to marry "a bad woman" (as he said) under the stress of circumstances, yet he promised himself that he would take it out of her for his present annoyance, after marriage.

Nastasia seemed to Totski to have divined all this, and to be preparing something on her own account, which frightened him to such an extent that he did not dare communicate his views even to the General; then after a while he would pluck up his courage and be full of hope and good spirits again, acting, in fact, as weak men do act in such circumstances.

However, both the friends felt that the thing looked rosy indeed when one day Nastasia informed them that she would give her final answer on the evening of her birthday, which anniversary was due in a very short time.

A strange rumour began to circulate, meanwhile; no less than that the respectable and highly respected General Epanchin was himself so fascinated by Nastasia Philipovna that his feeling for her amounted almost to passion. What he thought to

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gain by Gania's marriage to the girl it was impossible to imagine. At all events the fact was known that he had prepared a magnificent present of pearls for her birthday, and that he was looking forward to the occasion when he should present his gift with the greatest excitement and impatience. The day before her birthday he was in a fever of agitation.

Mrs. Epanchin could not help observing, of late, the absent condition of her husband; she had heard of the pearl brooch, she had even heard the rumour mentioned above, but she would not allow herself to believe it. The general remarked and watched her supicions, and felt that a grand explanation must shortly take place—which fact alarmed him much.

This is the reason why he was so unwilling to take lunch (on the morning upon which we took up this narrative) in the bosom of his family. Before the prince's arrival he had made up his mind to plead business, and "cut" the meal; this simply meant running away.

The general was particularly anxious that this one day should be passed—especially the evening—without unpleasantnesses between himself and his family; and just at the right moment the prince turned up, "just as though Heaven had sent him on purpose" said the general to himself, as he left the study to seek out the wife of his bosom.

V.

MRS. General Epanchin was a jealous woman, and a proud woman by nature. What must her feelings have been when she heard that Prince Muishkin, the last of his and her own line, had arrived in beggar's guise, a wretched idiot, a recipient of charity—all of which details the general gave out for greater effect; he was anxious to steal her interest at the first swoop, so as to distract her thoughts from other matters nearer home.

Mrs. General was in the habit of holding herself very straight, and staring before her, blinking her eyes, under circumstances of excitement.

She was a fine woman of the same age as her husband, with a slightly hooked nose, high, narrow forehead, thick hair turning

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a little grey, and yellow cheeks. Her eyes were grey and wore a very curious expression at times, which expression she believed to be most effective—a belief which was quite ineradicable from her mind.

"What, receive him! now, at once?" asked Mrs. Epanchin, blinking her eyes at her husband as she stood fidgetting before him.

"Oh, dear me, I assure you you need stand on no ceremony with him," the general explained hastily. "He is quite a child, not to say a poor pitiful wretch of a fellow. He has fits of some sort, and has just arrived from Switzerland, straight from the station, dressed like a German, and without a farthing in his pocket. I gave him twenty-five roubles to go on with, and am going to find him some easy place in one of the government offices. I should like you to ply him well with the victuals, my dears, for I should think he must be very hungry, he looks it!"

"You astonish me," said the lady, blinking as before, "fits, and hungry too! what sort of fits?"

"Oh, they don't come on frequently,—besides he's a regular child, though he seems to be fairly educated; I should like you, if possible, my dears," the general added, making slowly for the door, "to put him through his paces a bit, and see what he is good for. I think you should be kind to him, it is a sort of good deed, you know—however, just as you like, of course—but he is a sort of relation, remember, and I thought it might interest you to see the young fellow, seeing that this is so—"

"Oh, of course, mamma, if we needn't stand on ceremony with him, we must give the poor fellow something to eat after his journey, especially as he has not the least idea where to go to," said Alexandra, the eldest of the girls.

"Besides, he's quite a child; we can entertain him with a little hide-and-seek, in case of need," said Adelaida.

"Send him up, father; mother allows," said Aglaya.

The general rang the bell and gave orders that the prince should be shown in.

"Only on condition that he has a bib on at lunch, then," said Mrs. General, "and let Fedor, or Mavra, better, stand behind him while he eats; is he quiet when he has these fits? he doesn't show violence, does he?"

"On the contrary, he seems to be very well brought up; his manners are excellent, but—here he is himself. Here you are prince—let me introduce you, the last of the Muishkins, a

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rélative of your own, my dear, or at least of the same name. Receive him kindly, please. They'll bring in lunch directly, prince; you must stop and have some, but you must excuse me, I'm in a hurry, I must be off—"

"We all know where *you* must be off to!" cried Mrs. Epanchin.

"Yes, yes—I must hurry away, I'm late! Look here, dears, let him write you something in your albums, you've no idea what a wonderful caligraphist he is, wonderful talent! he has just written out 'Abbot Pafnúti signed this' for me. Well, *au revoir!*"

"Stop a minute; where are you off to? Who is this abbot?" cried Mrs. Epanchin to her retreating husband in a tone of excited annoyance.

"Yes, my dear, it was an old abbot of that name— I must be off to see the count, he's waiting for me, I'm late— Good-bye! *Au revoir*, prince!" and the General bolted at full speed.

"Oh, yes— I know what count you're going to see!" remarked his wife in a cutting manner, as she turned her angry eyes on the prince. "Now then, what's all this about?—What abbot— Who's Pafnúte?" she added, brusquely.

"Mamma!" said Alexandra, shocked at her rudeness.

Aglaya stamped her little foot.

"Nonsense! let me alone!" said the angry mother. "Now then, prince, sit down here, no, nearer, come nearer the light; I want to have a good look at you. So, now then, who is this abbot?"

"Abbot Pafnúte," said our friend, seriously and with deference.

"Pafnúte, yes. And who was he?"

Mrs. General put these questions hastily and brusquely, and when the prince answered she nodded her head sagely at each word he said.

"The Abbot Pafnúte lived in the fourteenth century," began the prince; "he was in charge of one of the monasteries over the Volga, about where our present Kostroma government lies. He went to Oreól and helped in the great matters then going on in the religious world; he signed an edict there, and I have seen a print of his signature; it struck me, so I copied it. When the general asked me, in his study, to write something for him to show my handwriting, I wrote 'The Abbot Pafnúte signed this,' in the exact handwriting of the abbot. The

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general liked it very much, and that's why he recalled the fact just now."

"Aglaya, make a note of 'Pafnúte,' or we shall forget him. H'm! and where is this signature?"

"I think it was left on the general's table."

"Let it be sent for at once!"

"Oh,. I'll write you a new one in half a minute!" said the prince, "if you like!"

"Of course, mamma!" said Alexandra, "but let's have lunch now, we are all hungry!"

"Yes; come along, prince," said the mother, "are you very hungry?"

"Yes; I must say that I am pretty hungry, thanks very much."

"H'm! I like to see that you are so courteous; and you are by no means such a person as the general thought fit to describe you. Come along; you sit here, opposite to me," she continued, "I wish to be able to see your face. Alexandra, Adelaida, take good care of the prince, he doesn't look so very ill, does he? I don't think he requires a napkin under his chin after all; are you accustomed to having a bib on, prince?"

"Formerly, when I was seven years old or so, I believe I wore one; but now I usually hold my napkin on my knee when I eat."

"Of course, of course! and about your fits?"

"Fits?" asked the prince, slightly surprised, "I very seldom have fits now-a-days; I don't know how it may be here, though; they say the climate may be bad for me."

"He talks very well, you know!" said Mrs. General, who still continued to nod at each word the prince spoke, "I really did not expect it at all; in fact, I suppose it was all stuff and nonsense on the General's part, as usual. Eat away, prince, and tell me where you were born, where were you brought up. I wish to know all about you, you interest me very much!"

The prince expressed his thanks once more, and eating heartily the while, recommenced the narrative of his life in Switzerland, all of which we have heard before. Mrs. General became more and more pleased with her guest; the girls, too, listened with considerable attention. In talking over the question of relationship it turned out that the prince was very well up in the matter and knew his pedigree off by heart; it was found that scarcely any connection existed be-

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tween himself and Mrs. General, but the talk, and the opportunity of conversing about her family gratified the latter exceedingly, and she rose from the table in great good humour.

"Let's all go to my boudoir," she said, "and they shall bring some coffee in there; that's the room where we all assemble and busy ourselves as we like best," she explained. "Alexandra, my eldest, here, plays the piano, or reads or sews; Adelaida, paints landscapes and portraits (but never finishes any); and Aglaya sits and does nothing; I don't read too much, either. Here we are, now; sit down, prince, near the fire and talk to us. I want to hear you relate something; I wish to make sure of you first and then tell my old friend, Princess Bielokonski, about you; I wish you to know all the good people and to interest them. Now then, talk!"

"Mamma, it's rather a strange order, that!" said Adelaida, who was fussing among her paints and paint brushes at the easel. Aglaya and Alexandra had settled themselves with folded hands on a sofa, evidently meaning to be listeners. The prince felt that the general attention was concentrated upon himself.

"I should refuse to say a word if *I* were ordered to tell a story like that!" observed Aglaya.

"Why? what's there strange about it? he has a tongue, why shouldn't he tell us something? I want to judge whether he is a good story-teller; anything you like, prince—how you approved of Switzerland, what was your first impression, anything; you'll see, he'll begin directly and tell us all about it beautifully."

"The impression was forcible—" the prince began.

"There, you see, girls," said the impatient mamma, "he *has* begun, you see."

"Well, then, *let* him talk, mother," said Alexandra; "this prince is a great humbug and by no means an idiot," she whispered to Aglaya.

"Oh, I saw that at once," replied the latter, "I don't think it at all nice of him to play a part, so; what does he wish to gain by it I wonder?"

"My first impression was a very powerful one," repeated the prince. "When they took me away from Russia, I remember I passed through many German towns and looked out of the windows at them, but did not trouble so much as to ask questions about them. This was after a long series of fits I

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always used to fall into a sort of torpid condition after such a series, and lost my memory almost entirely; and though I was not altogether without reason at such times, yet I had no logical power of thought. This would continue for three or four days, and then I would recover myself completely. I remember my melancholy was intolerable, I felt inclined to cry; I sat and wondered and wondered uncomfortably; the consciousness that all around was foreign weighed terribly upon me; I could understand that it was all foreign and strange. I recollect I awoke from this state for the first time at Basle, one evening; the bray of a donkey aroused me, a donkey in the town market. I saw the donkey and was extremely pleased with it and from that moment my head seemed to clear."

"A donkey? how strange; go on, prince."

"Since that evening I have been specially fond of donkeys. I began to ask questions about them, for I had never seen one before; and I at once came to the conclusion that this must be one of the most useful of animals—strong, willing, patient, cheap; and, thanks to this donkey, I began to like the whole country I was travelling through; and my melancholy passed away."

"All this is very strange and interesting," said Mrs. General: "now let's leave the donkey and go on to other matters. What are you laughing at, Aglaya? and you too, Adelaida. The prince told us his experiences very cleverly; he saw the donkey himself, and what have *you* ever seen? *you* have never been abroad."

"I have seen a donkey though, mamma!" said Aglaya.

"And I've heard one!" said Adelaida, all three of the girls laughed out loud and the prince laughed with them.

"Well, it's very bad of you," said mamma. "You must forgive them, prince; they are good girls, I am very fond of them though I often have to be scolding them, they are all as silly and mad as march hares."

"Oh, why shouldn't they laugh?" said the prince. "I shouldn't have let the chance go by in their place, I know; but I stick to the donkey, all the same; he's a capital fellow."

"Are you a long-suffering man, prince? I ask out of curiosity," said Mrs. General.

All laughed again.

"Oh, that wretched donkey again, I see!" cried Mrs. General, "I assure you, prince, I was not guilty of the least—"

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"Insinuation? Oh! I assure you I take your word for it," and the prince continued laughing merrily.

"I must say it's very nice of you to laugh. I see you really are a kind-hearted fellow," said Mrs. Epanchin.

"I'm not always kind, though."

"I am kind myself, and *always* kind too, if you please!" retorted Mrs. General, unexpectedly; "and that is my chief fault, for one ought not to be always kind. I am often angry with these girls and their father; but the worst of it is, I am always kindest when I am cross. I was very angry just before you came, and Aglaya there read me a lesson—thanks, Aglaya, dear—come and kiss me—there—that's enough," she added, as Aglaya came forward and kissed her lips and then her hand. "Now then, go on, prince; perhaps you can think of something more exciting than about the donkey, eh?"

"I must say, again, *I* can't understand how you can expect anyone to tell you stories straight away, so," said Adelaida. "*I* know I never could!"

"Yes, but the prince can, because he is clever—cleverer than you are by ten—or twenty times if you like. There, that's so, prince; and seriously, let's drop the donkey now—what else did you see abroad, besides the donkey?"

"Yes, but the prince told us about the donkey very cleverly, all the same," said Alexandra; "I have always been most interested to hear how people go mad and get well again, and that sort of thing."

"Quite so, quite so!" cried Mrs. Epanchin, delighted; "I see you *can* be sensible now and then, Alexandra. You stayed in Switzerland, didn't you, prince?"

"Yes. We came to Lucerne, and I was taken out in a boat. I felt how lovely it was, but the loveliness weighed upon me somehow or other, and made me feel melancholy."

"Why?" asked Alexandra.

"I don't know; I always feel like that when I look at the beauties of nature for the first time; but then, I was ill at that time, of course!"

"Oh, but I should like to see it!" said Adelaida; "and I don't know *when* we shall ever go abroad. I've been two years looking out for a subject for a picture. I've done all I know. 'The North and South I know by heart,' as our poet observes. Do help me to a subject, prince."

"Oh but I know nothing about painting; it seems to me one only has to look out of window, and jot down what one sees"

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"But I have nothing to look at!"

"Nonsense, what rubbish you talk!" the mother struck in; "nothing to look at! open your eyes and look! if you can't see here, you won't see abroad either. Tell us what you saw yourself, prince!"

"Yes, that's better," said Adelaida; "the prince *learned to see* abroad."

"Oh, I hardly know! you see, I only went to restore my health. I don't know whether I learned to see, exactly; I was very happy, however, nearly all the time."

"Happy! you can be happy?" cried Aglaya. "Then how can you say you did not learn to see? I should think you could teach *us* to see."

"Oh! *do* teach us," laughed Adelaida.

"Oh! I can't do that," said the prince, laughing too; "I lived almost all the while in one little Swiss village, what can I teach you about that? At first I was only just not absolutely dull; then my health began to improve—then every day became dearer and more precious to me, and the longer I stayed, the dearer became the time to me; so much so that I could not help observing it; but why this was so, it would be difficult to say."

"So that you didn't care to go away anywhere else?"

"Well, at first I did; I was disturbed; I didn't know how ever I should manage to support life—you know there are such moments, especially in solitude. There was a waterfall near us, such a lovely thin streak of water, like a thread, but white and moving. It fell from a great height, but it looked quite low, and it was half a mile away, though it did not seem fifty paces distant. I loved to listen to it at night, but it was then that I became so disturbed. Sometimes I went and climbed the mountain and stood there in the midst of the solitude and the fir trees, all alone in the silence, with our little village in the distance, and the sky so blue, and the sun so bright, and an old ruined castle in the distance. I used to watch the line where earth and sky met, and long to go and seek there for some great city where life should be grander and newer than our own—and then it struck me that life may be grand enough even in a prison."

"I read that last most praiseworthy thought in my 'manual' when I was twelve years old," said Aglaya.

"All this is pure philosophy," said Adelaida; "you are a philosopher, prince, and have come here to impress us into your views."

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"Perhaps you are right," said the prince, smiling. "I think I am a philosopher, seriously, and who knows, perhaps I *do* wish to teach my views of things to those I meet with, who knows?"

"Your philosophy is rather like that of an old woman we know, who is very rich and yet does nothing but try how little she can spend; she talks of nothing but *co eaks* all day. Your great philosophical idea of a grand life in a prison and your four happy years in that Swiss village are like this, rather," said Aglaya.

"As to life in a prison, of course there may be two opinions," said the prince; "I once heard the story of a man who lived twelve years in a prison—I heard it from the man himself; he was one of the persons under treatment with my professor; he had fits and attacks of anxiety and melancholy, when he would weep, and once he tried to commit suicide. *His* life in prison was sad enough; his only acquaintances were spiders and a tree that grew outside his grating—but I think I had better tell you of another man I met last year; there was a very strange feature in this case, strange because of its extremely rare occurrence. This man had once been brought to the scaffold in company with several others, and had had the sentence of death by shooting passed upon him for some political crime. Twenty minutes later he had been reprieved and some other punishment subsituted; but the interval between the two sentences, twenty minutes, or at least a quarter of an hour, had been passed in the certainty that within a few minutes he must die. I was very anxious to hear him speak of his impressions during that dreadful time, and I several times inquired of him as to what he thought and felt. He remembered everything with the most accurate and extraordinary distinctness, and declared that he would never forget a single iota of the experience.

"About twenty paces from the scaffold, where he had stood to hear the sentence, were three posts, fixed in the ground, to which to fasten the criminals (of whom there were several). The first three criminals were taken to the posts, tied up and dressed in their garb of death—long white tunics, and white caps drawn over their faces, so that they could not see the rifles pointed at them; then a group of soldiers took their stand opposite to each post.

"My friend was the eighth on the list, and therefore he would have been among the third lot to go up. A priest went about

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among them all with a cross; and there was about five minutes of time left for him to live.

"He said that those five minutes seemed to him to be a most interminable period, an enormous wealth of time; he seemed to be living, in these minutes, so many lives that there was no need as yet to think of that last moment, so that he made several arrangements, dividing up the time into portions—one for saying farewell to his companions, two minutes for that; then a couple more for thinking over his own life and career and all about himself; and another minute for a last look around. He remembered having divided his time like this quite well. While saying good-bye to his friends he recollected asking one of them some most usual everyday question, and being much interested in the answer. Then having bade farewell, he embarked upon those two minutes which he had allotted to looking into himself; he knew beforehand what he was going to think about. He wished to put it to himself as quickly and clearly as possible, that here was he, a living, thinking man, and that in three minutes he would be nobody; or if somebody or something, then what and where? He thought he would decide this question once for all in these last three minutes. A little way off there stood a church, and its gilded spire glittered in the sun. He remembered staring stubbornly at this spire, and at the rays of light sparkling from it. He could not tear his eyes from these rays of light, he got the idea that these rays were his new nature, and that in three minutes he would become one of them, amalgamated somehow with them.

"The repugnance to and uncertainty of what must ensue almost immediately were dreadful, he said; but what was the heaviest weight of all was the idea, what should I do if I were not to die now? What if I were to return to life again? What an eternity of days, and all mine! How I should grudge and count up every minute of it, so as to waste not a single instant! He said that this thought weighed so upon him and became such a terrible burden upon his brain that he could not bear it, and wished they would shoot him quickly and have done with it."

The prince paused and all waited, expecting him to go on again and finish the story.

"Is that all?" asked Aglaya.

"All? yes," said the prince, emerging from a momentary reverie.

"And why did you tell us this?"

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"Oh, I happened to recall it, that's all! it fitted into the conversation—"

"You probably wish to deduce, prince, that moments of time cannot be reckoned by money value, and that sometimes five minutes are worth priceless treasures. All this is very praiseworthy; but may I ask how about this friend of yours, who told you the terrible experience of his life? He was reprieved you say, in other words, they did restore to him that 'eternity of days.' What did he do with these riches of time? Did he keep careful account of his minutes?"

"Oh, no, he didn't! I asked him myself. He said that he had not lived a bit as he had intended, and had wasted many and many a minute."

"Very well, then there's an experiment, and the thing is proved; one cannot live by strict account; say what you like, but one *cannot.*"

"That is true," said the prince, "I have tried it myself."

"But, prince, I wish you had seen an execution," said Aglaya, "I should like to ask you a question about that, if you had."

"I have seen an execution," said the prince.

"You have!" cried Aglaya; "I might have guessed it. That's a fitting crown to the rest of the story. If you have seen an execution how can you say you lived happily all the while?"

"But is there capital punishment where you were?" asked Adelaida.

"I saw it at Lyons; Schneider took us there, and as soon as we arrived we came in for that."

"Well, and did you like it very much? was it very edifying and instructive?" asked Aglaya.

"No, I didn't like it at all, and was ill after seeing it; but I confess I stared as though my eyes were fixed to the sight; I could not tear them away."

"I, too, should have been unable to tear my eyes away," said Aglaya.

"They do not at all approve of women going to see an execution there; the women who do go are condemned for it afterwards in the newspapers."

"That is, by contending that it is not a sight for women they admit that it is a sight for men. I congratulate them on the deduction. I suppose you quite agree with them, prince?"

"Tell us about the execution," put in Adelaida.

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"I would much rather not, just now," said the prince, a little disturbed and frowning slightly.

"You seem to be sorry for our feelings," said Aglaya.

"No,—the thing is, I was telling all about the execution a little while ago, and—"

"Whom did you tell about it?"

"The man-servant, while I was waiting to see the general."

"Our man-servant?" exclaimed several voices at once.

"Yes, the one who waits in the entrance hall, a greyish, red-faced man—"

"The prince is clearly a democrat," remarked Aglaya. "Well, if you could tell Alekséy about it, surely you can tell us too."

"I do so want to hear about it," repeated Adelaida.

"Just now, I confess," began the prince, with more animation (I must say he used to regain his animated manner remarkably quickly after a reverie), "when you asked me for a subject for a picture, I confess I had serious thoughts of giving you one. I thought of asking you to draw the face of a criminal, one minute before the fall of the guillotine knife, while the wretched man is still standing on the scaffold, preparatory to placing his neck on the block."

"What, his face? only his face?" asked Adelaida. "That would be a strange subject indeed. And what sort of a picture would that make?"

"Oh, why not?" the prince insisted, with some warmth. "When I was in Basle I saw a picture very much in that style—I should like to tell you about it; I will some time or other; it struck me very forcibly."

"Oh, you shall tell us about the Basle picture another time; now we must have all about the execution," said Adelaida. "Tell us about that face as it appeared to your imagination—how should it be drawn?—just the face alone, do you mean?"

"It was just a minute before the execution," began the prince, readily, carried away by the recollection and evidently forgetting everything else in a moment; "just at the instant when he stepped off the ladder on to the scaffold; he happened to look in my direction, I saw his eyes and understood all, at once—but how am I to describe it? I do so wish you or somebody else could draw it,—you, if possible. I thought at the time what a picture it would make. You must imagine all that went before of course, all—all! He had

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lived in the prison for some time and had not expected that the execution would take place for at least a week yet,—he had counted on all the formalities and so on taking time; but it so happened that his papers had been got ready quickly. At five o'clock in the morning he was asleep—it was October, and at five in the morning it was cold and dark. The governor of the prison comes in on tip-toe and touches the sleeping man's shoulder gently. He starts up, 'What is it?' he says. 'The execution is fixed for ten o'clock.' He was only just awake, and would not believe at first, but began to argue that his papers would not be out for a week, and so on. When he was wide awake and realised the truth, he became very silent, and argued no more—so they say; but after a bit he said, 'It comes very hard on one so suddenly;' and then he was silent again and said no more.

"The three or four hours went by of course in necessary preparations,—the priest, breakfast (coffee, meat, and some wine they gave him), doesn't it seem ridiculous; and yet I believe these good people give them a good breakfast out of pure kindness of heart, and believe that they are doing a good action; then he is dressed, and then begins the procession through the town to the scaffold. I think he too must feel that he has an age to live still while they cart him along. Probably he thought as he drove on, 'Oh, I have a long, long time yet, three streets of life yet. When we've passed this street there'll be that other one; and then that one where the baker's shop is on the right; and when shall we get there—it's ages, ages!' Around him are crowds shouting, yelling—ten thousand faces, twenty thousand eyes. All this has to be taken into account, and especially the thought: 'Here are ten thousand men, and not one of them is going to be executed, and yet I am to die. Well, all that is preparatory.

"At the scaffold there is a ladder, and just there he burst into tears—and this was a strong man, and a terribly wicked one, they say! There is a priest with him the whole time, talking; even in the cart as they drove along, he talked and talked. Probably the other heard nothing; he would begin to listen now and then, and at the third word or so he had forgotten all about it.

"At last he begins to mount the steps; his legs are tied, so that he has to take very small steps. The priest, who seemed to be a wise man, had stopped talking now, and only held the cross for the wretched fellow to kiss. At the foot of the ladder he had been pale enough; but when he set foot on the scaffold

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at the top, his face suddenly became the colour of paper, positively like white note-paper. His legs must have become suddenly feeble and helpless, and he felt a choking in his throat—you know the sudden feeling one has in moments of terrible fear, when one does not lose one's wits, but is absolutely powerless to move? If some dreadful thing were suddenly to happen; if a house were just about to fall on one—don't you know how one would long to sit down and shut one's eyes and wait—and wait? Well, when this terrible feeling came over him, the priest quickly pressed the cross to his lips, without a word—a little silver cross it was—and he kept on pressing it to the man's lips every second. And whenever the cross touched his lips, the eyes would open for a moment, and the legs moved once, and he kissed the cross greedily—hurriedly—just as though he were anxious to catch hold of *something*, in case of its being useful to him afterwards, though he could hardly have had any connected religious thoughts at the time.

"And so up to the very block.

"How strange that criminals seldom swoon at such a moment! On the contrary, the brain is especially active, and works incessantly—probably hard, hard, hard—like an engine at full pressure. I imagine that various thoughts must beat loud and fast through his head—all unfinished ones, and strange, funny thoughts very likely!—like this, for instance: 'That fellow there has a wart on his forehead! and the executioner has burst one of his buttons, and that lowest one is all rusty!' and meanwhile one notices and remembers everything. There is one point that cannot be forgotten, round which everything else dances and turns about; and because of this point he cannot faint or swoon, and this lasts until the very final quarter of a second, when the wretched neck is on the block and the victim listens and waits and *knows*—that's the point, he *knows* that he is just *now* about to die, and listens for the rasp of the iron over his head. If I lay there, I should certainly listen for that grating sound, and hear it, too! There would probably be but the tenth part of a little instant left to hear it in, but one would certainly hear it. And imagine, some people declare that when the head flies off it is *conscious* of having flown off. Just imagine what a thing to realise; fancy if that consciousness were to last for even five seconds.

"Draw the scaffold so that only the top step of the ladder comes in clearly. The culprit must be just stepping on to it, his head and face as white as note-paper; the priest is holding

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the cross to his blue lips, and the criminal kisses it, and knows and sees and understands everything. The cross and the head —there's your picture; the priest and the executioner, with his two assistants, and a few heads and eyes below. Those might come in as subordinate accessories—a sort of mist—there's a picture for you." The prince paused, and looked around.

"Now tell us how you fell in love," said Adelaida, after a moment's pause.

The prince gazed at her in amazement.

"You know," Adelaida continued, "you owe me a description of the Basle picture; but first I wish to hear how you fell in love. Don't deny the fact, for you *did*, of course."

"Why are you always ashamed of your stories the moment after you have told them?" asked Aglaya.

"How silly you are," said Mrs. General, looking indignantly towards the last speaker.

"Yes, that wasn't a clever remark," said Alexandra.

"Don't listen to her, prince," said Mrs. General; "she says that sort of thing out of mischief. Don't think anything of their nonsense, it means nothing; they love to chaff, but they like you, I can see it in their faces—I know their faces."

"I know their faces, too," said the prince, with some stress on his words.

"How so?" asked Adelaida, with curiosity.

"What do *you* know about our faces?" exclaimed the other two, in chorus.

But the prince was silent and serious; all awaited his reply.

"I'll tell you afterwards," he said quietly.

"Ah, you want to spur our curiosity!" said Aglaya, "and how terribly solemn you are about it."

"Very well," interrupted Adelaida, "then if you can read faces so well, you *must* have been in love. Come now; I've guessed—let's have the secret."

"I have not been in love," said the prince, as quietly and seriously as before; "I have been happy in another way."

"How—how?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said the prince, apparently in deep reverie.

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VI.

"HERE you all are," began the prince, "settling yourselves down to listen to me with so much curiosity, that if I do not satisfy you you will probably be angry with me. No, no! I'm only joking!" he added, hastily, with a smile.

"Well, then—they were all children there, and I was always among children and only with children. They were the children of the village in which I lived, and they went to the school there—all of them. I did not teach them, oh, no! there was a master for that, one Jules Thibaut. I may have taught them some things, but I was among them just as an outsider, and I passed all four years of my life there among them. I wished for nothing better, I used to tell them everything and hid nothing from them. Their fathers and relations were very angry with me, because the children could do nothing without me at last, and used to throng after me at all times; the schoolmaster was my greatest enemy at the end! I had many enemies, and all because of the children. What were they afraid of? One can tell a child everything, anything. I have often been struck by the fact that parents know their children so little. They should not conceal so much from them. How well even little children understand that their parents conceal things from them because they consider them too young to understand. Children are capable of giving advice in the most important matters. How *can* any one deceive these dear little birds, when they look at one so sweetly and confidingly. I call them birds because there is nothing in the world better than birds!

"However, most of the people were angry with me about one and the same thing; and Thibaut simply hated me. At first he had wagged his head and wondered how it was that the children understood what I told them so well and could not learn from him; and he laughed like anything when I replied that neither he nor I could teach them very much, but that *they* might teach *us* a good deal.

"How could he hate me and tell scandalous stories about me, living among children as he did, that's what I cannot understand. Children soothe and cure the wounded heart. I remember there was one poor fellow at our professor's who was being treated for madness, and you can have no idea what

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those children did for him, eventually. But I'll tell you all about him another day, now I must get on with this story.

"The children did not love me at first; I was such a sickly, awkward kind of a fellow then—and then I know I am ugly—besides, I was a foreigner. The children used to laugh at me, at first; and they even went so far as to throw stones at me when they saw me kiss Marie. I only kissed her once in my life—no, no, don't laugh!" the prince hastened to suppress the smiles of his audience at this point; "it was not a matter of *love* at all!

"If only you knew what a miserable creature she was, you would have pitied her, just as I did. She belonged to our village; her mother was an old, old woman, and they used to sell string and thread, and soap and tobacco, out of the window of their little house, and lived on the pittance they gained by this trade. The old woman was ill and very old, and could hardly sit up; Marie was her daughter, a girl of twenty, weak and thin and consumptive; but still she did heavy char-work at the houses around, day by day— Well, one fine day a commercial traveller betrayed her and carried her off; and a week after he left her alone in the high road, and quietly drove away. She came home dirty, draggled, and shoeless; she had walked for a whole week without shoes; she had slept in the fields, and had a terrible cold; her feet were swollen and sore, and her hands torn and scratched all over. She never had been pretty even before; but her eyes were quiet, innocent, kind eyes.

"She was very quiet always—and I remember once, when she had suddenly begun singing at her work, everyone said, 'Marie tried to sing to-day!' and she got so chaffed that she was silent for ever after. She had been treated kindly in the place before; but when she came back now—ill and shunned and miserable—not one of them all had the slightest sympathy for her. Cruel people! and oh! what hazy understandings they have on such matters. Her mother was the first to show the way. She received her wrathfully, unkindly, and with contempt 'You have disgraced me,' she said. She was the first to cast her into ignominy; but when they all heard that Marie had returned to the village, they ran out to see her and crowded into the old woman's little cottage—old men, children, women, girls,—all—such a hurrying, stamping, greedy crowd. Marie was lying on the floor at the old woman's feet, hungry, torn, draggled, crying, miserable.

"When everyone crowded into the room she hid her face

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with her dishevelled hair and lay cowering on the floor. Everyone looked at her as though she were a piece of dirt off the road; the old men scolded and condemned and the young ones laughed at her; the women condemned her too, and looked down at her so contemptuously, just as though she were some loathsome insect.

"Her mother allowed all this to go on and nodded her head and encouraged them. The old woman was very ill at that time, and thought she was dying (she really did die a couple of months later), and though she felt the end approaching she never thought of forgiving her daughter to the very day of her death; she would not even speak to her, she made her sleep on straw in a shed, and hardly gave her food enough to support life.

"Marie was very gentle and affectionate to her mother and nursed her and did everything for her; but the old woman accepted all her services without a word and never showed her the slightest kindness. Marie bore all this; and I could see when I got to know her that she thought it quite right and fitting, considering herself the lowest and meanest of crawling creatures.

"When the old woman took to her bed finally, the other old women in the village looked after her in turns, as the custom is there; and then Marie was quite driven out of the house; they gave her no food at all, and she could not get any work in the village, none would employ her. The men seemed to consider her no longer a woman, they said such dreadful things to her. Sometimes on Sundays if they were drunk enough, they used to throw her a penny or two, into the mud, and Marie would silently pick up the money. She had begun to spit blood at that time.

"At last her rags became so tattered and torn that she was ashamed of appearing in the village any longer; the children used to pelt her with mud; so she begged to be taken on as assistant cow-herd, but the cow-herd would not have her. Then she took to helping him without leave; and he saw how valuable her assistance was to him, and did not drive her away again; on the contrary, he occasionally gave her the remnants of his dinner, bread and cheese. He considered that he was doing a most charitable action. When the mother died the village parson was not ashamed to hold Marie up to public derision and shame. Marie was standing at the coffin's head, in all her rags, crying.

"A host of people had collected to see how she would cry.

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The parson, a young fellow ambitious of becoming a great preacher, began his sermon and pointed to Marie. 'There,' he said, 'there is the cause of the death of this venerable woman' (which was a lie, because she had been ill for at least two years), 'there she stands before you, and dares not lift her eyes from the ground, because she knows that the finger of God is upon her. Look at her tatters and rags—the badge of those who lose their virtue. Who is she? her daughter!' and so on to the end.

"And just fancy, this meanness pleased them, all of them, nearly; but it was the cause of a little episode, the children interfered—for by that time they were all on my side and had learned to love Marie.

"This is how it was: I had wished to do something for Marie; I longed to give her some money, but I never had a farthing while I was there. But I had a little diamond pin, and this I sold to a travelling pedlar; he gave me eight francs for it—it was worth at least forty.

"I long sought to meet Marie all alone; and at last I did meet her, on the hillside beyond the village. I gave her the eight francs and asked her to take care of the money because I could get no more; and then I kissed her and said that she was not to suppose I kissed her with any evil motives or because I was in love with her, for that I did so solely out of pity for her, and because from the first I had not accounted her as guilty so much as unfortunate. I longed to console and encourage her somehow, and to assure her that she was not the low, base thing which herself and others strove to make her out; but I don't think she understood me. She stood before me, dreadfully ashamed of herself, and with downcast eyes; and when I had finished she kissed my hand. I would have kissed hers but she drew it away. Just at this moment the whole troop of children saw us (I found out afterwards that they had long kept a watch upon me). They all began whistling and clapping their hands, and laughing at us. Marie ran away at once; I was about to talk to them, but they threw stones at me. All the village heard of it the same day, and Marie's position became worse than ever. The children would not let her pass now in the streets, but annoyed her and threw dirt at her more than before. They used to run after her—she racing away with her poor feeble lungs panting and gasping, and they pelting her and shouting abuse at her.

"Once I had to interfere by force; and after that I took to speaking to them every day and whenever I could. Occasion-

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ally they stopped and listened; but they teased Marie all the same.

"I told them how unhappy Marie was, and after a while they stopped their abuse of her, and let her go by silently. Little by little we got into the way of conversing together, the children and I. I concealed nothing from them, I told them all. They listened very attentively and soon began to be sorry for Marie. At last some of them took to saying 'Good-morning' to her, kindly, when they met her; it is the custom there to salute any one you meet with 'good-morning' whether acquainted or not. I can imagine how astonished Marie was with these first greetings from the children.

"Once two little girls got hold of some food and took it to her, and came back and told me. They said she had burst into tears and that they loved her very much now. Very soon after that they all became very fond of Marie, and at the same time they began to develop the greatest affection for myself. They often came to me and begged me to tell them stories; I think I must have told stories well, for they did so love to hear them. At last I took to reading up tales on purpose to pass them on to the little ones, and this went on for all the rest of my time there, three years. It was two weeks before her mother died that I had kissed Marie; and when the clergyman preached that sermon the children were all on my side.

"When I told them what a shame it was of the parson to talk as he had done, and explained my reason, they were so angry that some of them went and broke his windows with stones; of course I stopped them, for that was not right, but all the village had heard of it, and how I caught it for spoiling the children! everyone discovered now that the little ones had taken to being fond of Marie, and their parents were terribly alarmed; but Marie was so happy. The children were forbidden to meet Marie; but they used to run out of the village to the herd and take her food and things; and sometimes just ran off there and kissed her and said, '*Je vous aime, Marie!*' and then trotted back again.

"In the evening I used to walk to the waterfall; there was a spot there which was quite closed in and hidden from view by large trees; and to this spot the children used to come to me They all believed that I loved Marie, and could not bear that their dear Leon should love a poor girl without shoes to her feet and dressed all in rags and tatters; so, would you believe it? they actually clubbed together, somehow, and bought her shoes and stockings, and some linen, and even a dress.

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I can't understand how they managed it, but they did it, all together. When I asked them about it they only laughed and shouted, and the little girls clapped their hands and kissed me. I sometimes went to see Marie too. She had become very ill now, and could hardly walk. She still went with the herd, but could not help the herdsman any longer. She used to sit on a stone near, and wait there almost motionless all day, till the herd went home. Her consumption was so advanced, and she was so weak that she used to sit with closed eyes, breathing heavily; her face was as thin as a skeleton, and sweat used to stand on her white brow in large drops. I always found her sitting just like that. I used to come up quietly to look at her; but Marie would hear me, open her eyes, and tremble violently as she kissed my hands. I did not take my hand away because it made her happy to have it, and so she would sit and tremble and cry quietly. Sometimes she tried to speak; but it was very difficult to understand her. She was almost like a mad woman, with agitation and ecstasy, whenever I came. Occasionally the children came with me; when they did so, they would stand some way off and keep guard and watch over us, so as to tell me if any body came near.

"When we left her, Marie used to relapse at once into her old condition, and sit with closed eyes and motionless limbs. The children loved to look after us like that, and used to watch with great mystery and satisfaction. Well, one day Marie could not go out at all, and remained at home all alone in her empty hut; but the children very soon became aware of the fact, and nearly all of them visited her that day as she lay alone and helpless in her miserable bed.

"Two days the children looked after her so, and then, when the village people got to know that Marie was really dying, some of the old women came and took it in turns to sit by her and look after her a bit. I think they began to be a little sorry for Marie in the village at last; at all events they did not interfere with the children any more, on her account.

"Marie lay in a state of uncomfortable delirium the whole while; she coughed dreadfully. The old women would not let the children stay in the room; but they all collected outside the window each morning, if only for a moment, and shouted '*Bon jour, notre bonne Marie!*' and Marie no sooner caught sight of, or heard them, than she became quite animated at once, and, in spite of the old women, would try to sit up and nod her head and smile at them, and thank them. The little ones used to bring her nice things and sweets to eat,

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but she could hardly touch anything. Thanks to them, I assure you, the girl died almost perfectly happy. She almost forgot her misery before them, and seemed to accept their love as a sort of symbol of pardon for her offence, though she never ceased to consider herself a dreadful sinner. Those dear little things used to flutter at her window just like little birds, and shout out: '*Nous t'aimons, Marie!*'

"She died very soon; I had thought she would live much longer. The day before her death I went to see her for the last time, just before sunset; I think she recognised me, and pressed my hand; how her hand had dried up and withered!

"Next morning they came and told me that Marie was dead. The children could not be restrained now; they went and covered all her coffin with flowers, and put a wreath of lovely blossoms on her head. The pastor did not throw any more shameful words at the poor dead woman; but there were very few people at the funeral. However, when it came to carrying the coffin, all the children rushed up to carry it themselves; of course they could not do that, but they insisted on helping, and walked alongside and behind crying.

"They have planted roses all round her grave, and every year they look after the flowers and make Marie's resting-place as beautiful as they can. I was in very ill-odour after all this with the parents of the children, and especially with the parson and schoolmaster. Schneider was obliged to promise that I should not meet them and talk to them; but we conversed from a distance by signs, and they used to write me sweet little notes. Afterwards I became closer than ever with those little souls, but even then it was very dear to me, to have them so fond of me.

"Schneider said that I did the children great harm by my 'system;' what nonsense that was; and what did he mean by my system? He said afterwards that he believed I was a child myself, and always should be; of course that is nonsense, too; but it is a fact that I do not care to be among grown up people and much prefer the society of children. However kind people may be to me, I never feel quite at home with them, and am always glad to get back to my little companions. People may consider me a child if they like. I am often called an idiot, and at one time I certainly was so ill that I was nearly as bad as an idiot; but I am not an idiot now—how can I possibly be so when I know myself that I am considered one?

"When I received a letter from those dear little souls, while

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passing through Berlin, I only then realised how much I love them. It was very, very painful getting that first little letter. How melancholy they had been when they saw me off. For a month before they had been talking of my departure and sorrowing over it; and at the waterfall, of an evening, when we parted for the night, they would hug me so tight and kiss me so warmly, far more so than before. And every now and then they would turn up one by one when I was alone, just to give me a kiss and a hug, and to show their love for me. They did their best not to cry when I went; but many of them, especially the little girls, cried aloud as the train steamed out of the station; and I saw them all standing on the platform waving to me and crying till they were lost in the distance.

"I assure you, when I came in here just now and saw your dear kind faces (I can read faces well) my heart felt light for the first time since that moment of parting. I think I must be one of those who are born to be in luck, for one does not often meet with people whom one feels he can love from the first sight of their faces; and yet, no sooner do I step out of the railway carriage than I happen upon you!

"I know it is more or less a shamefaced thing to speak of one's feelings before others; and yet here am I talking like this to you and am not a bit ashamed or shy. I am an unsociable sort of fellow and shall very likely not see any of you again for some time; but don't think the worse of me for that, it is not that I do not value your society; and you must never suppose that I have taken offence at anything.

"You asked me about your faces, and what I could read in them; I will tell you with the greatest pleasure. You, Adelaida Ivanovna, have a very happy face; it is the most sympathetic of all the three. Not to speak of your natural beauty, one can look at your face and say to one's self, 'She has the face of a kind, sisterly woman.' You are simple and merry, but you can feel for another's heart very quickly. That's what I read in your face.

"You too, Alexandra Ivanovna, have a very lovely face; but I think you may have some secret sorrow; your heart is undoubtedly a kind, good one, but you are not merry; there is a certain suspicion of "shade" in your face, like in that of Holbein's Madonna in Dresden. So much for your face, have I guessed right?

"As for your face, Lizabetha Prokofievna, I not only think, but am perfectly *sure* that you are an absolute child—in all, in all, mind, both good and bad—and in spite of your years. Don't

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be angry with me for saying so, you know what my feelings for children are. And do not suppose that I am so very candid out of pure simplicity of soul. Oh dear no, it is by no means the case, I assure you; perhaps I have my own very profound object in view."

VII.

WHEN the prince ceased speaking all were gazing merrily at him—even Aglaya; but Lizabetha Prokofievna looked the jolliest of all.

"Well!" she cried, "we *have* 'put him through his paces,' with a vengeance. My dears, you imagined, I believe, that you were about to patronize this young gentleman, like some poor wretched *protégé* picked up somewhere, and taken under your magnificent protection. My word, what fools we were, and what a specially big fool is your father. Well done, prince; I assure you the general actually asked me to put you through your paces, and examine you. As to what you said about my face, you are absolutely correct in your judgment. I am a child, and know it. I knew it long before you said so, but you have expressed my idea in one word. I think your nature and mine must be extremely alike, and I am very glad of it; we are like two drops of water, only you are a man and I a woman, and I've not been to Switzerland, and that is all the difference between us."

"Don't be in a hurry, mother; the prince says that he has something behind his simple declaration."

"Yes, yes, so he does," laughed the others.

"Oh, don't you begin bantering him," said mamma; "he is probably a good deal more cunning than all three of you girls together. We shall see, only you haven't told us anything about Aglaya yet, prince; and Aglaya and I are both waiting to hear."

"I cannot say anything at present. I'll tell you afterwards."

"Why? *her* face is clear enough, isn't it?"

"Oh yes, of course. You are very beautiful, Aglaya Ivanovna, so beautiful that one is afraid to look at you."

"Is that all? what about her character?" said Mrs. General.

"It is difficult to judge when such beauty is concerned, I have not prepared my judgment. Beauty is a riddle."

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"That means that you have set Aglaya a riddle? guess it Aglaya. But she's pretty, prince, isn't she?"

"Most wonderfully so," said the latter, warmly, and gazing at Aglaya with a look of exultation. "Almost as lovely as Nastasia Philipovna, but quite a different type."

All present exchanged looks of surprise.

"As lovely as *who*?" said Mrs. General; "as *Nastasia Philipovna*? where have you seen Nastasia Philipovna? what Nastasia Philipovna?"

"Gavrila Ardalionovitch showed the general her portrait just now."

"How so? did he bring the portrait for my husband?"

"Only to show; Nastasia Philipovna gave it to Gavrila Ardalionovitch to-day, and the latter brought it here to show to the general."

"I must see it!" cried Mrs. General; "where is the portrait? If she gave it to him, he must have it; and he is still in the study. He never leaves before four o'clock on Wednesdays. Send for Gavrila Ardalionovitch at once. No, I don't long to see *him* so much. Look here, dear prince, *be* so kind, will you? Just step to the study and fetch this portrait? say we want to look at it; please do it for me, will you?"

"He is a nice fellow, but a little too simple," said Adelaida, as the prince left the room.

"He is, indeed," said Alexandra, "almost laughably so at times."

Neither one nor the other seemed to give expression to their full thoughts.

"He got out of it very neatly about our faces, though," said Aglaya; "he flattered us all round, even mamma."

"Nonsense!" cried the latter. "I think you are a great deal more laughable than he is. He is simple, of course, but nobly so. Just like myself."

"How stupid of me to speak of the portrait," thought the prince as he entered the cabinet, with a feeling of guilt at his heart, "and yet, perhaps I was right after all;" he had an idea, unformed as yet, but a strange idea.

Gavrila Ardalionovitch was still sitting in the study, buried in a mass of papers. He looked as though he did not take his salary from the public company, whose servant he was, for a sinecure.

He grew very wroth and confused when the prince asked for the portrait and explained how it came about that he was applying for it.

"Oh, curse it all," he said, "what on earth must you go

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blabbing for? you know nothing about the thing, and yet you —idiot!" he added, muttering the last word to himself in irrepressible rage.

"I am very sorry, I was not thinking at the time. I merely said that Aglaya was almost as beautiful as Nastasia Philipovna."

Gania asked for further details; and the prince once more repeated the conversation. Gania looked at him with ironical contempt the while.

"Nastasia Philipovna," he began, and there paused; he was clearly much agitated and annoyed. The prince reminded him of the portrait.

"Listen, prince," said Gania, as though an idea had just struck him, "I wish to ask you a great favour, and yet I really don't know—"

He paused again, confused; he was trying to make up his mind to something, and was turning the matter over. The prince waited quietly. Once more Gania fixed him with an intent and questioning stare.

"Prince," he began again, "they are rather angry with me there, in the dining-room, owing to a circumstance which I need not explain, so that I do not care to go there at present without an invitation. I particularly wish to speak to Aglaya, but I have written a few words in case I shall not have the chance of seeing her" (here the prince observed a small note in his hand), "and I do not know how to get my communication to her. Don't you think you could undertake to give it to her at once, but only to her, mind, and so that no one else should see you give it? It isn't much of a secret, but still— Well, will you do it?"

"I don't quite like it," replied the prince.

"Oh, but it is absolutely necessary for me," Gania entreated; "believe me, if it were not so, I would not ask you; how else am I to get it to her? it is most important to me, dreadfully important!"

Gania was evidently much alarmed at the idea that the prince would not consent to take his note, and he looked at him now with an expression of timid entreaty.

"Well, I will take it then."

"But mind, nobody is to see," cried the delighted Gania; "and of course I may rely on your word of honour, eh?"

"I won't show it to anyone," said the prince.

"The letter is not sealed—" continued Gania, and paused in confusion.

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"Oh, I won't read it," said the prince, quite simply.

He took up the portrait, and went out of the room.

Gania, left alone, seized his head with his hands.

"One word from her," he said, "one word from her, and I may yet be free."

He could not settle himself to his papers again, for agitation and excitement, but began walking up and down the room from corner to corner.

The prince walked along musing; he did not like his commission, and disliked the idea of Gania sending notes to Aglaya at all; but when he was two rooms distant from the drawing-room, where they all were, he stopped as though recalling something; went to the window, nearer the light, looked about him, and began to examine the portrait in his hand.

He longed to unravel something in the face of Nastasia Philipovna, something which had struck him as he looked at the portrait for the first time; the impression had not left him. It was partly the fact of her marvellous beauty that struck him, and partly something else. There was a suggestion of immense pride and disdain and hatred in the face, and at the same time something confiding and very full of simplicity; the contrast seemed to arouse sympathy in his heart as he looked at the lovely face. The blinding loveliness of it was almost intolerable, this pale thin face with its flaming eyes; it was a strange beauty.

The prince gazed at it for a minute or two, then glanced around once more, and hurriedly put the portrait to his lips. When, a minute after, he reached the drawing-room door his face was quite composed. But just as he reached the door he met Aglaya coming out; she was all alone.

"Gavrila Ardalionovitch begged me to give you this," he said, handing her the note.

Aglaya stopped, took the letter and gazed strangely into the prince's eyes. There was no expression of confusion in her face; a little surprise, perhaps, but that was all. By her look she seemed merely to challenge the prince to an explanation as to how he and Gania happened to be connected in this matter. But the demand was perfectly cool and quiet and even condescending.

So they stood for a moment or two confronting one another. At length a faint ironical smile covered her lip, and she took the note and passed by him without a word.

Mrs. General examined the portrait of Nastasia Philipovna for some little while, holding it critically at arm's length.

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"Yes, she is pretty," she said at last, "even very pretty; I have seen her twice, but only at a distance. So you admire this kind of beauty, do you?" she asked the prince, suddenly.

"Yes, I do—this kind."

"Do you mean especially this kind?"

"Yes, specially this kind."

"Why?"

"There is much suffering in this face," murmured the prince, more as though talking to himself than answering the question.

"I think you are wandering a little, prince," Mrs. General decided, after a lengthened survey of his face; and she tossed the portrait on to the table, haughtily.

Alexandra took it, and Adelaida came up, and both the girls examined the photograph. Just then Aglaya entered the room.

"What a power," cried Adelaida suddenly, as she greedily examined the portrait over her sister's shoulder.

"Whom? what power?" asked her mother, crossly.

"Such beauty is real power," said Adelaida, hotly. "With such beauty as that she might overthrow the world." She returned to her easel thoughtfully.

Aglaya merely glanced at the portrait—frowned, and put out her underlip; then went and sat down on the sofa with folded hands. Mrs. General rang the bell.

"Ask Gavrila Ardalionovitch to step this way," said she to the man who answered the bell.

"Mamma," cried Alexandra, significantly.

"I shall just say two words to him, that's all," said her mother, silencing all objection by her manner; she was evidently seriously put out. "You see, prince, it is all 'secrets' with us, just now—all secrets. It seems to be the etiquette of the house, for some reason or other. Stupid nonsense,—and this is a matter which ought to be approached with all candour and open heartedness. There is a marriage being talked off, and I don't like this marriage—"

"Mamma, what are you saying," said Alexandra again, hurriedly.

"Well, what, my dear girl? as if you can possibly like it yourself? Don't smile like that, Aglaya. I don't contradict myself. A fool with heart and no brains is just as unhappy a woman as is a fool with brains and no heart. I am one and you are the other, and therefore both of us suffer, both of us are unhappy."

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"Why are you so unhappy as all that, mother?" asked Adelaida, who alone of all the company seemed to have preserved her good temper and spirits up to now.

"In the first place, because of my carefully brought-up daughters," said Mrs. General, cuttingly; "and as that is the best reason I can give you we need not bother about any other at present. Enough of words now! We shall see how both of you (I don't count Aglaya) will get out of the business, and whether you, most revered Alexandra Ivanovna, will be happy with your fine mate."

"Ah!" she added, as Gania suddenly entered the room, "here's another marrying subject. How do you do?" she continued, in response to Gania's bow; but she did not invite him to sit down. "You are going to be married?"

"Married? how—what marriage?" murmured Gania, overwhelmed with confusion.

"Are you about to take a wife? I ask,—if you prefer that expression."

"No, no! I—no!" said Gania, bringing out his lie with a tell-tale blush of shame. He glanced keenly at Aglaya, who was sitting some way off, and dropped his eyes immediately.

Aglaya gazed coldly, intently, and composedly at him, without taking her eyes off his face, and watched his confusion.

"No? you say no, do you?" continued the pitiless Mrs. General. "Very well, I shall remember that you told me this Wednesday morning, in answer to my question, that you are not going to be married. What day is it, Wednesday isn't it?"

"Yes, I think so!" said Adelaida.

"You never know the day of the week; what's the day of the month?"

"Twenty-seventh!" said Gania.

"Twenty-seventh, very well; good-bye now, you have a good deal to do, I'm sure, and I must dress and go out; take your portrait. Give my respects to your unfortunate mother, Nina Alexandrovna. *Au revoir*, dear prince, come in and see us often, do; and I shall tell old Princess Bielokonski about you. I shall go and see her on purpose. And look here, my dear boy, I feel sure that God has sent you to Petersburg from Switzerland on purpose for me; maybe you will have other things to do, besides, but you are sent chiefly for my sake, I feel sure of it. God sent you to me; *au revoir*, my dear boy. Alexandra, come in here, like a good soul."

Mrs. General left the room.

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Gania—confused, annoyed, furious—took up his portrait and turned to the prince with a nasty smile on his face.

"Prince," he said, "I am just going home; if you have not changed your mind as to living with us, perhaps you would like to come with me. You don't know the address, I believe?"

"Wait a minute, prince," said Aglaya, suddenly rising from her seat, "do write something in my album first, will you? Father says you are a most talented caligraphist; I'll bring you my book in a minute." She left the room.

"Well, *au revoir*, prince," said Adelaida, "I must be going too;" she pressed the prince's hand warmly and gave him a kind friendly smile as she left the room. She did not so much as look at Gania.

"This is your doing, prince," said Gania, making for the latter so soon as the others were all out of the room, "this is your doing, sir; *you* have been telling them that I am going to be married," he said this in a hurried whisper, his eyes flashing with rage and his face ablaze with wild fury—"you shameless tattler!"

"I assure you, you are under a delusion," said the prince, calmly and politely; "I did not even know that you were to be married."

"You heard me talking about it, the general and me, you heard me say that everything was to be settled to-day at Nastasia Philipovna's, and you went and blurted it out here. You lie if you deny it. Who else could have told them? Devil take it, sir, who could have told them except yourself? Didn't the old woman as good as hint as much to me?"

"If she hinted to you who told her you must know best, of course; but I never said a word about it."

"Did you give my note? is there an answer?" interrupted Gania, impatiently.

But at this moment Aglaya came back, and the prince had no time to reply.

"There, prince," said she, "there's my album; now choose a page and write me something, will you? there's a pen, a new one; do you mind a steel one? I have heard that you caligraphists don't like steel pens."

Conversing with the prince, Aglaya did not even seem to notice that Gania was in the room. But while the prince was getting his pen ready, finding a page, and making his preparations to write, Gania came up to the fireplace where Aglaya

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was standing, just at the right of the prince, and in trembling, broken accents said, almost in her ear:

"One word, just one word from you, and I'm saved."

The prince turned sharp round and looked at both of them. Gania's face was full of real despair; he seemed to have said the words almost unconsciously and on the impulse of the moment.

Aglaya gazed at him for some seconds with precisely the same composure and calm astonishment as she had put on a little while before, when the prince handed her the note; and it appeared that this calm surprise and seemingly absolute incomprehension of what was said to her, were more terribly overwhelming to Gania than even the most plainly expressed disdain would have been.

"What shall I write?" asked the prince.

"I'll dictate to you directly," said Aglaya, coming up to the table; "now then, are you ready? write, 'I never condescend to bargain!' now then, put your name and the date. Let's see it."

The prince handed her the album.

"Capital! how beautifully you do it, what a lovely hand! Thanks so much; *au revoir*, prince. Wait a minute," she added, "I want to give you something for a keepsake, come with me this way will you?"

The prince followed her. Arrived at the dining-room she stopped.

"Read this," she said, handing him Gania's note.

The prince took it from her hand, but gazed at Aglaya in bewilderment.

"Oh! I *know* you haven't read it, and that you could never be that man's accomplice. Read it, I wish you to read it."

The letter had evidently been written in a hurry:

"My fate is to be decided to-day" (it ran), "you know how. This day I must give my word irrevocably; I have no right to ask your help, and I dare not allow myself to indulge in any hopes; but once you said just one word, and that word lighted up the night of my life, and became the beacon of my days. Say one more such word, and save me from utter ruin. Only tell me 'break off the whole thing!' and I will do so this very day. Oh! what can it cost you to say just this one word, in doing so you will but be giving me a sign of your sympathy for me, and of your pity; only this, *only* this; nothing more, *nothing*. I dare not indulge in any hope, because I am unworthy of it. But if you say but this word, I will take up my

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cross again with joy, and return once more to my battle with despair. I shall meet the storm and be glad of it; I shall rise from battling it with renewed strength.

"Send me back then this one word of sympathy, only sympathy, I swear to you; and oh! do not be angry with the audacity of despair, with the drowning man who has dared to make this last effort to save himself from perishing beneath the waters.

G. I."

"This man assures me," said Aglaya, scornfully, when the prince had finished reading the letter, "that the words 'break off everything' do not commit me to anything whatever; and himself gives me a written guarantee to that effect, in this letter. Observe how ingenuously he underlines certain words, and how crudely he glosses over his hidden thoughts.

"He must know that if he 'broke off everything,' but *first*, and by himself, and without telling me a word about it or having the slightest hope on my account, that in that case I should perhaps be able to change my opinion of him, and even accept his—friendship. He must know that, but his soul is such a wretched thing,—he knows it and cannot make up his mind; he knows it and yet asks for guarantees. He cannot bring himself to *trust*; he wants me to give him hopes of myself before he lets go of his hundred thousand roubles. As to the 'former word' which he declares 'lighted up the night of his life,' he is simply an impudent liar, I merely pitied him once. But he's an audacious and shameless wretch; he immediately took hope, at that very moment, I saw he did, then. He has tried to catch me ever since, he is still fishing for me; well, enough of this. Take the letter and give it back to him, as soon as you have left our house, not before of course."

"And what shall I tell him by way of answer?"

"Nothing—of course! that's the very best answer. Is it the case that you are going to live in his house?"

"Yes, your father kindly recommended me to him."

"Then look out for him, I warn you! He won't forgive you very soon now, if you give him back the letter."

Aglaya pressed the prince's hand and left the room. Her face was serious and frowning; she did not even smile as she nodded good-bye to him at the door.

"I'll just get my parcel and we'll go," said the prince to Gania, as he re-entered the drawing-room. Gania stamped his foot with impatience. His face looked dark and gloomy with rage.

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At last they left the house behind them, the prince carrying his bundle.

"The answer—quick—the answer!" said Gania, the instant they were outside. "What did she say? did you give the letter?" The prince silently held out the note. Gania was struck motionless with amazement.

"How, what? my letter?" he cried—"and he never delivered it. I might have guessed it, oh! curse him! of course she did not understand what I meant, naturally. Why—why—*why* didn't you give her the note, you damned—"

"Excuse me; I was able to deliver it almost immediately after receiving your commission, and I gave it, too, just as you asked me to. It has come into my hands now because Aglaya Ivanovna has just returned it to me."

"How—when?"

"As soon as I finished writing in her album for her, and when she asked me to come out of the room with her (you heard?), we went into the dining-room, and she gave me your letter, made me read it, and then told me to return it."

"To *read* it?" cried Gania, almost at the top of his voice; "to *read* it, and you read it?"

And again he stood like a log in the middle of the pavement; but so amazed that his mouth remained open after the last word had left it.

"Yes, I have just read it."

"And she gave it you to read herself—*herself?*"

"Yes, herself; and you may believe me when I tell you that I would not have read it for anything without her permission."

Gania was silent for a minute or two, as though thinking out some problem; suddenly he cried:

"It's impossible, she cannot have given it to you to read; you are lying, you read it yourself!"

"I am telling you the truth," said the prince in his former composed tone of voice; "and believe me, I am extremely sorry that the circumstance should have made such an unpleasant impression upon you!"

"But, you wretched man, at least she told you to say something to me; there must be *some* answer from her?"

"Yes, of course she did say something!"

"Out with it then, d—n your eyes, out with it at once!" and Gania stamped his foot twice on the pavement.

"As soon as I had finished reading it, she told me that you

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were fishing for her; that you wished to compromise her so far as to receive some hopes from her, trusting to which hopes you might break with the prospect of receiving a hundred thousand roubles. She said that if you had done this without bargaining with her, if you had broken with the money prospects without trying to bully a guarantee out of her first, she might have been your friend. That's all, I think. Oh no, when I asked her what I was to say, as I took the letter, she replied that 'no answer is the best answer.' I think that was it. Forgive me if I do not use her exact expressions, I tell you the sense as I understood it myself."

Ungovernable rage and madness took entire possession of Gania, and his fury burst out without the least attempt at restraint.

"Oh! that's it, is it!" he yelled, "she throws my letters out of the window, does she. Oh! and she does not condescend to bargain, while *I do*, eh? We shall see, we shall see! I shall pay her out for this."

He twisted himself about with rage, and grew paler and paler; he shook his fist. So the pair walked along a few steps. Gania did not stand on ceremony with the prince, he behaved just as though he were all alone in his room; he clearly counted the latter for nothing, a nonentity. But suddenly he seemed to have an idea and recollected himself:

"But how was it?" he asked, "how was it that you (idiot that you are)" he added to himself, "were so very confidential a couple of hours after your first meeting with these people? How was that, eh?"

Up to this moment jealousy had not been one of his bitterest torments, it now suddenly gnawed at his heart.

"That is a thing I cannot undertake to explain," replied the prince. Gánia looked at him with angry contempt.

"Oh! I suppose the present she wished to make to you, when she took you into the dining-room, was her *confidence*, eh?"

"I suppose that was it; I cannot explain it otherwise!"

"But why, *why*? devil take it, what did you do in there? why did they fancy you? look here, can't you remember exactly what you said to them, from the very beginning? can't you remember?"

"Oh, we talked of a great many things; when first I went in there we began to speak of Switzerland."

"Oh, the devil take Switzerland!"

"Then about executions."

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"Executions?"

"Yes—at least about one, then I told the whole three years' story of my life, and the history of a poor peasant girl—"

"Oh, damn the peasant girl! go on, go on!" said Gania, impatiently.

"Then how Schneider told me about my childish nature, and—"

"Oh, *curse* Schneider and his dirty opinions! Go on."

"Then I began to talk about faces, at least about the *expressions* of faces, and said that Aglaya Ivanovna was nearly as lovely as Nastasia Philipovna. It was then I blurted out about the portrait—"

"But you didn't repeat what you heard in the study? you didn't repeat that—eh?"

"No, I tell you I did *not*."

"Then how did they—look here; did Aglaya show my letter to the old lady?"

"Oh, there I can give you my fullest assurance that she did *not*. I was there all the while—she had no time to do it!"

"But perhaps you may not have observed it, oh, you damned idiot you!" he yelled, quite beside himself with fury: "and you can't even describe what went on."

Gania having once descended to abuse, and receiving no check, very soon knew no bounds or limit to his licence, as is often the way in such cases. His rage so blinded him that he had not even been able to detect that this "idiot," whom he was abusing to such an extent, was very far from being slow of comprehension, and had a way of taking in an impression, and afterwards giving it out again, which was very un-idiotic indeed. But something a little unforeseen now occurred.

"I think I ought to tell you, Gavrila Ardalionovitch," said the prince, suddenly, "that though I once was so ill that I really was little better than an idiot, yet now I am almost recovered, and that, therefore, it is not altogether pleasant to be called an idiot to my face—of course your anger is excusable, considering the treatment you have just experienced; but I must remind you that you have twice abused me rather rudely. I do not like this sort of thing, and especially so at the first time of meeting a man, and, therefore, as we happen to be at this moment standing at a cross road, don't you think we had better part, you to the left, homewards, and I to the right, here? I have twenty-five roubles, and I shall easily find some *Hôtel-garnie*."

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Gania was much confused, and blushed for shame. "Do forgive me, prince!" he cried, suddenly changing his abusive tone for one of great courtesy, "for Heaven's sake forgive me! You see what a miserable plight I am in, you hardly know anything of the facts of the case as yet; if you did I am sure you would forgive me, at least partially; of course it was inexcusable of me, I know, but—"

"Oh, dear me, I really do not require such profuse apologies," replied the prince, hastily. "I quite understand how unpleasant your position is, and that that is what made you abuse me. So come along to your house after all, I shall be delighted—"

"I am not going to let him go like this," thought Gania, glancing angrily at the prince as they walked along; "the rascal of a fellow has sucked everything out of me, and now he takes off his mask—there's something more than appears, here—we shall see, it shall all be as clear as water by to-night, every thing!"

But by this time they had reached Gania's house.

VIII.

THE lodging occupied by Gania and his family was on the third floor of the house; and was reached by a clean light staircase, and consisted of seven rooms, a nice enough lodging, and one would have thought a little too good for a clerk on two thousand roubles a year. But it was designed to accommodate a few lodgers on board terms, and had been taken a few months since, much to the disgust of Gania, at the urgent request of his mother and his sister, Varvara Ardalionovna, who longed to do something to increase the family income a little, and fixed their hopes upon letting lodgings. Gania frowned down the idea, he thought it *infra dig*, and did not quite like appearing in society afterwards—that society in which he had been accustomed to pose up to now as a young man of rather brilliant prospects. All these concessions and rebuffs of fortune, of late, had wounded his spirit severely, and his temper had become extremely sensitive, his wrath being generally quite out of proportion to

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the cause: but if he had made up his mind to put up with this sort of thing for a while, it was only under the plain understanding with his inner self that he would very soon change it all, and have things as he chose again.

The lodging was divided by a passage which led straight out of the entrance hall. Along one side of this corridor lay the three rooms which were designed for the accommodation of the lodgers, "highly recommended lodgers." Besides these three rooms there was another small one at the end of the passage, close up to the kitchen, which was allotted to General Ivolgin, the nominal master of the house, who slept on a wide sofa, and was obliged to pass into and out of his room through the kitchen, and up or down the back stairs. Colia, Gania's young brother, a school-boy of thirteen, shared this room with his father. He, too, had to sleep on an old sofa, a narrow, uncomfortable little thing with a torn sheet over it; his duty being to look after his father, who needed to be watched more and more every day.

The prince was shown to the middle room of the three, the first of which was occupied by one Ferdishenko, and the third of which was empty.

But Gania first conducted the prince to the family apartments. These consisted of a "salon," which became the dining-room when required; a drawing-room, which was only a drawing-room in the morning, and became Gania's study in the evening, and his bedroom at night; and lastly Nina Alexandrovna's and Varvara's bedroom, a small close chamber which they shared together.

In a word, the whole place was confined and a "tight fit" for the party; Gania used to grind his teeth with rage over the state of affairs; but he was anxious to be dutiful and polite to his mother; however, it was very soon apparent to anyone coming into the house, that Gania was the great despot and tyrant of the family.

Nina Alexandrovna and her daughter were both seated in the drawing-room, engaged in some knitting work, and talking to a visitor, Ivan Petrovitch Ptitsin.

The lady of the house appeared to be a woman of about fifty years of age, thin-faced, and with deep black lines under the eyes. She looked ill and rather sad, but her face was a pleasant one for all that; and from the first word that fell from her lips, any stranger would at once conclude that she was of a serious and particularly sincere nature. In spite of her sorrow-

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ful expression, she gave the idea of possessing considerable firmness and decision.

Her dress was modest and simple to a degree, dark and old-woman like; but both her face and appearance, generally, gave evidence that she was a lady who had seen better days.

Varvara was a girl of some twenty-three summers, of middle height, thin, but possessing a face which, without being actually beautiful, had the rare quality of pleasing, without much actual beauty, and of fascinating, perhaps, to the extent of passionate regard.

She was very like her mother; she even dressed like her, which proved that she had no taste for smart clothes. The expression of her grey eyes was merry and gentle, when it was not, as lately, too full of thought and anxiety. The same decision and firmness was to be observed in her face as in her mother's, but her strength seemed to be more *available* than that of Nina Alexandrovna. She was subject to fits of temper of which even her brother was a little afraid.

The present visitor, Ptitsin, was also afraid of her. This was a young fellow of something under thirty, dressed plainly, but neatly; his manners were good, but rather ponderously so. His dark beard bore evidence to the fact that he was not in any government employ. He could speak well, but preferred silence. On the whole he gave a decidedly agreeable impression. He was clearly attracted by Varvara, and made no secret of his feelings; she trusted him in a friendly way, but had not shown him any decided encouragement as yet, which fact did not discourage him in the least.

Nina Alexandrovna was very fond of him, and had been very confidential with him of late. Ptitsin, as was well known, was engaged in the business of lending out money on good security, and at a good rate of interest. He was a tried friend of Gania's.

After a formal introduction by Gania (who greeted his mother very shortly, took no notice of his sister, and immediately marched Ptitsin out of the room), Nina Alexandrovna addressed a few kind words to the prince and forthwith requested Colia, who had just appeared at the door, to show him to the "middle room."

Colia was a nice-looking boy; his expression was simple and confiding, and his manners were very polite and engaging.

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"Where's your luggage?" he asked, as he led the prince away to his room.

"I had a bundle; it's in the entrance hall."

"I'll bring it you directly. We only have a cook and one maid, so I have to help as much as I can. Varia (Varvara) looks after things, generally, and loses her temper over it. Gania says you have only just arrived from Switzerland?"

"Yes."

"Is it jolly there?"

"Very."

"Hills?"

"Yes."

"I'll go and get your bundle."

Here Varvara joined them.

"The maid shall bring your bed linen directly; have you a portmanteau?"

"No; a bundle—your brother has just gone to the hall for it."

"There's no bundle there except this little thing," said Colia, returning at this moment. "Where did you put it?"

"Oh! but that's all I have," said the prince, taking it.

"Ah! I thought perhaps Ferdishenko had taken it."

"Don't talk nonsense," said Varia, severely. She seemed put out and was only just polite with the prince.

"Oho!" laughed the boy, "you can be politer than that to *me*, you know—I'm not Ptitsin."

"You ought to be whipped, Colia, you silly boy. If you want anything" (to the prince) "please apply to the servant. We dine at half-past four, you can take your dinner with us, or have it in your room, just as you please. Come along, Colia, don't disturb the prince."

At the door they met Gania coming in.

"Is father in?" he asked. Colia whispered something in his ear and went out.

"Just a couple of words, prince, if you'll excuse me. Don't blab over *there* about what you may see here, or in this house as to all that about Aglaya and me, you know. Things are not altogether pleasant in this establishment—devil take it all! you'll see—at all events keep your tongue to yourself for *to-day*."

"I assure you I 'blabbed' a great deal less than you seem to suppose," said the prince, with some annoyance. Clearly the relations betweeen Gania and himself were by no means improving.

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"Oh! well; I caught it quite hot enough to-day, thanks to you. However, I forgive you."

"I think you might fairly remember that I was not in any way bound, I had no reason to be silent about that portrait. You never asked me not to mention it."

"Pfu! what a wretched room this is—dark, and the window looking into the yard. Your coming to our house is, in no respect, opportune. However, it's not *my* affair. *I* don't keep the lodgings."

Ptitsin here looked in and beckoned to Gania, who hastily left the room, in spite of the fact that he had evidently wished to say something more and had only made the remark about the room to gain time. The prince had hardly had time to wash and arrange his dress a little when the door opened once more and another figure appeared.

This was a gentleman of about thirty, tall, broad-shouldered, and red-haired; his face was red, too, and he possessed a pair of thick lips, a wide nose, small eyes, rather bloodshot, and with an ironical expression in them; as though he were perpetually winking at some one. His whole appearance gave one the idea of impudence; his dress was shabby.

He opened the door just enough to let his head in. His head remained so placed for a few seconds while he quietly scrutinized the room; the door then opened enough to admit his body; but still he did not enter. He stood at the threshold and examined the prince carefully. At last he gave the door a final shove, entered, approached the prince, took his hand and seated himself and the lord of the room on two chairs side by side.

"Ferdishenko," he said, gazing intently and inquiringly into the prince's eyes.

"Very well, what next?" said the latter, almost laughing in his face.

"A lodger here?" continued the other, staring as before.

"Do you wish to make acquaintance?" asked the prince.

"Ah!" said the visitor, passing his fingers through his hair and sighing. He then looked over to the other side of the room and around it: "Got any money?" he asked, suddenly.

"Not much."

"How much?"

"Twenty-five roubles."

"Let's see it."

The prince took his banknote out and showed it to Ferdi-

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shenko. The latter unfolded it and looked at it; then he turned it round and examined the other side; then he held it up to the light.

"How strange that it should have browned so," he said, reflectively; "these twenty-five rouble notes *brown* in a most extraordinary way, while other notes often grow paler. Take it."

The prince took his note. Ferdishenko rose.

"I came here to warn you," he said; "in the first place, don't lend me any money, for I shall certainly ask you to."

"Very well."

"Shall you pay here?"

"Yes, I intend to."

"Oh! I *don't* intend to. Thanks. I live here, next door to you; you noticed a room, did you? Don't come to me very often; I shall see you here quite often enough, I assure you. Have you seen the general?"

"No."

"Nor heard him?"

"No; of course not."

"Well, you'll both hear and see him soon; he even tries to borrow money from me. *Avis au lecteur*. Good-bye; do you think Ferdishenko can possibly live in a family like this?"

"Why not?"

"Good-bye."

And so he departed. The prince found out afterwards that this gentleman made it his business to amaze people with his originality and wit, but that it did not as a rule "come off." He even produced a bad impression on some people by his mannerisms, which grieved him sorely; but he did not change his ways for all that.

As he went out of the prince's room, he collided with yet another visitor coming in. Ferdishenko took the opportunity of making several warning gestures to the prince from behind the new arrival's back, and left the room in conscious pride.

This next arrival was a tall red-faced man of about fifty-five, with greyish hair and whiskers, and large eyes which stood out of their sockets. His appearance would have been rather distinguished had it not been that he gave the idea of being worn-out and run down. He was dressed in an old coat, and he smelled of vodki when he came near. His walk was effective, and he clearly did his best to appear dignified, and to impress with his dignity.

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This gentleman now approached the prince slowly, and with a most courteous smile; silently took his hand and held it in his own as he examined the prince's features as though searching for familiar traits therein.

"'Tis he, 'tis he!" he said at last, quietly, but with much solemnity. "As though he were alive once more. I heard the familiar name—the dear familiar name—and, oh! how it reminded me of the irrevocable past— Prince Muishkin, I believe?"

"Exactly so."

"General Ivolgin—retired and unhappy. May I ask your Christian and generic names?"

"Lef Nicolaievitch."

"So, so—the son of my old, I may say my childhood's friend, Nicolai Petrovitch."

"My father's name was Nicolai Ivanovitch."

"Ivanovitch," repeated the general without the slightest haste, and with perfect confidence, just as though he had not committed himself the least in the world, but merely made a little slip of the tongue. He sat down, and taking the prince's hand gave him a seat next to himself.

"I carried you in my arms as a baby," he observed.

"Really?" asked the prince. "Why, it's twenty years since my father died."

"Yes, yes—twenty years and three months. We were educated together; I went straight into the army, and he—"

"My father went into the army, too. He was a sub-lieutenant in the Vasilievsky regiment."

"No, sir—in the Bielomirsk; he changed into the latter shortly before his death. I was at his bedside when he died, and gave him my blessing for eternity. Your mother—" The general paused, as though overcome with emotion.

"She died a few months later, of cold," said the prince.

"Oh, not from cold—believe an old man—not from a cold, but of grief for her prince. Oh—your mother, your mother! heigh-ho! youth—youth. Your father and I—old friends as we were—nearly murdered each other for her sake."

The prince began to be a little incredulous.

"I was fearfully in love with her when she was still engaged—engaged to my friend. The prince noticed the fact and was furious. He came and woke me at seven o'clock one morning. I rise and dress in amazement; silence on both sides. I understand it all. He takes a couple of pistols out of his pocket—a cross, a handkerchief—without witnesses. Why invite witnesses

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when both of us would be walking in eternity in a couple of minutes? The pistols are loaded; we stretch the handkerchief and stand opposite one another, holding the ends. We press the pistols to each other's heart. Suddenly tears start to our eyes, our hands shake; we weep, we embrace—the battle is one of self-sacrifice now. The prince shouts, 'She is yours;' I cry, 'She is yours—' in a word, in a word— You've come to live with us, hey?"

"Yes—yes—for a while, I think," stammered the prince.

"Prince, mother begs you to come to her," said Colia, appearing at the door.

The prince rose to go, but the general once more laid his hand in a friendly manner on his shoulder, and dragged him down on to the sofa.

"As the true friend of your father, I wish to say a few words to you," he began. "I have suffered—there was a catastrophe. I suffered without a trial; I had no trial. Nina Alexandrovna, my wife, is an excellent woman, so is my daughter Varvara; we have to let lodgings because we are poor—a dreadful, unheard-of come down for us—for me, who should have been a governor-general; but we are very glad to have *you*, at all events. Meanwhile there is a tragedy in the house."

The prince looked inquiringly at the other.

"Yes, a marriage is being arranged—a marriage between a questionable woman and a young fellow who might be a flunky. They wish to bring this woman into the house where my wife and daughter reside, but while I live and breathe she shall never enter my doors. I shall lie at the threshold, and she shall trample me under foot if she does. I hardly talk to Gania now, and avoid him as much as I can. I warn you of this beforehand, but you cannot fail to observe it. But you are the son of my old friend, and I hope—"

"Prince, be so kind as to come to me for a moment in the drawing-room," said Nina Alexandrovna herself, appearing at the door.

"Imagine, my dear," cried the general, "it turns out that I have nursed the prince on my knee in the old days." His wife looked daggers at the general, and glanced curiously at the prince, but said nothing. The prince rose and followed her; but hardly had they reached the drawing-room and sat down, and Nina Alexandrovna began to talk, when in came the general; and she immediately relapsed into silence. The master of the house may have observed this, but at all events he did not take any notice of it; he was in high good humour.

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"A son of my old friend, dear," he cried; "surely you must remember Prince Nicolai Ivanovitch? You saw him at—at Tver."

"I don't remember any Nicolai Ivanovitch. Was that your father?" she enquired of the prince.

"Yes; but he died at Elizabethgrad, not at Tver," said the prince, rather timidly; "so Pavlicheff told me—"

"No, Tver," insisted the general; "he removed just before his death. You were very small and cannot remember; and Pavlicheff, though an excellent fellow, may have made a mistake."

"You knew Pavlicheff then?"

"Oh, yes—a wonderful fellow; but I was present myself."

"Father, your dinner is ready," said Varvara at this point, putting her head in at the door.

"Very glad, I'm particularly hungry—quite a coincidence."

"Your soup'll be cold, do come."

"Coming, coming," said the general. "Son of my old friend —" he was heard muttering as he went down the passage.

"You will have to excuse very much in my husband, if you stay with us," said Nina Alexandrovna; "but he will not disturb you often, he dines alone; everyone has his little peculiarities, you know, and some people perhaps have more than those who are most pointed at and laughed at. One thing I must beg of you—if my husband applies to you for payment for board and lodging, tell him that you have already paid me. Of course anything paid by you to the general would be as fully settled as if paid to me, so far as you are concerned; but I wish it to be so if you please, for form's sake. What is it Varia?"

Varia had quietly entered the room, and was holding out the portrait of Nastasia Philipovna to her mother.

Nina Alexandrovna shuddered, and examined the photograph intently, gazing at it long and sadly. At last she looked up inquiringly at Varia.

"It's a present from herself to him," said Varia, "the question is to be finally decided this evening."

"This evening!" repeated her mother in a tone of despair, but softly, as though to herself; "then it's all settled, of course, and there's no hope left to us. She has anticipated her answer by the present of her portrait. Did he show it you himself?" she added, in some surprise.

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"You know we have hardly spoken to each other for a whole month. Ptitsin told me all about it; and the photo was lying under the table, and I picked it up."

"Prince," asked Nina Alexandrovna, "I wanted to inquire whether you have known my son long? I think he said that you had only arrived to-day from somewhere."

The prince gave a short narrative of what we have heard before, leaving out the greater part. The two ladies listened intently.

"I did not ask about Gania out of curiosity," said the elder, at last; "I wish to know how much you know about him, because he said just now that you know all, and we need not stand on ceremony with you."

At this moment Gania and Ptitsin entered the room together, and Nina Alexandrovna immediately relapsed into silence. The prince remained seated next to her, but Varia moved to the other end of the room; the portrait of Nastasia Philipovna remained lying as before on the work-table. Gania observed it there, and with a frown of annoyance snatched it up and threw it across to his writing table, which stood at the other end of the room.

"To-day, Gania?" asked Nina Alexandrovna, at last.

"What about to-day?" cried the former; then suddenly recollecting himself he turned sharply on the prince, "oh," he growled, "I see, you are here, that explains it! Is it a disease, or what, that you can't hold your tongue? Look here, understand once for all, prince—"

"I am to blame in this, Gania—no one else," said Mr. Ptitsin.

Gania glanced inquiringly at the speaker.

"It's better so, you know, Gania—especially as, from one point of view, the matter may be considered as settled," said Ptitsin; and sitting down a little way from the table he began to busy himself over a pencil and paper.

Gania stood and frowned; he expected a family scene. He never thought of apologizing to the prince, however.

"If it's all settled, Gania, then of course Mr. Ptitsin is right," said Nina Alexandrovna; "don't frown, you need not worry yourself, Gania, I shall ask you no questions,—you need not tell me anything you don't like; I assure you I have quite submitted to your will." She said all this, knitting away the while as though perfectly calm and composed.

Gania was surprised, but cautiously kept silence and looked at his mother, hoping that she would express herself more clearly.

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Nina Alexandrovna observed his cautionsness and added, with a bitter smile:

"You are still suspicious, I see, and do not believe me; but you may be quite at your ease; there shall be no tears, no questions—nothing from my side, at all events. All I wish is that you may be happy, you know that. I have submitted to my fate; but my heart will always be with you, whether we remain united, or whether we part. Of course I only answer for myself,—you can hardly expect your sister—"

"My sister again," cried Gania, looking at her with contempt and almost hate; "look here, mother, I have already given you my word that I shall always respect you fully and absolutely, and so shall every one else in this house, be it who it may, whosoever shall cross this threshold."

Gania was so much in earnest that he gazed at his mother almost affectionately

"I was not at all afraid for myself, Gania, as you know well. It was not for my own sake that I have been so anxious and worried all this time! They say it is all to be settled to-day; what is to be settled?"

"She has promised to tell me to-night at her own house whether she consents or not," replied Gania.

"We have been silent on this subject for three weeks," said his mother, "and it was better so; and now I will only ask you one question. How can she give her consent and make you a present of her portrait when you do not love her? How can such a—such a—"

"Practised hand—eh?"

"I was not going to express myself so. How could you so blind her?"

Nina Alexandrovna's question betrayed intense annoyance. Gania waited a moment and then said, without taking the trouble to conceal the irony of his tone.

"There you are, mother, you are always like that. You begin by promising that there are to be no reproaches or insinuations or questions, and here you are beginning them at once. We had better drop the subject—we had, really. I shall never leave you, mother; any other man would cut and run from such a sister as this. See how she is looking at me at this moment. Besides, how do you know that I am blinding Nastasia Philipovna? As for Varia, I don't care—she can do just as she pleases. There, that's quite enough!"

Gania's irritation increased with every word he uttered, as he

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walked up and down the room. These conversations always touched the family sores before long.

"I have said already that the moment she comes in I go out, and I shall keep my word," remarked Varia.

"Out of obstinacy!" shouted Gania, "you haven't married, — thanks to your obstinacy. Oh, you needn't frown at me, Varvara, you can go at once for all I care, I am sick enough of your company. What, you are going to leave us are you, too?" he cried, turning to the prince who was rising from his chair.

Gania's voice was full of the most uncontrolled and uncontrollable rage.

The prince turned at the door to say something, but perceiving in the expression of the angry young fellow that there was but that one drop wanting to make the cup overflow, he changed his mind and left the room without a word. A few minutes later he was aware from the noisy voices in the drawing-room, that the conversation there had become more quarrelsome than ever after his departure.

He crossed the salon and thence into the entrance-hall, so as to pass down the corridor into his own room. As he came near the front door he heard someone outside vainly endeavouring to ring the bell, which was evidently broken, and only shook a little, without emitting the slightest sound.

The prince took down the chain and opened the door. He started back, trembling with amazement — for there stood Nastasia Philipovna. He knew her at once by her photograph. Her eyes blazed with anger as she looked at him; she quickly pushed by him into the hall, shouldering him out of her way, and said, furiously, as she threw off her fur cloak:

"If you are too lazy to mend your bell, you should at least wait in the hall to let people in when they rattle the bell handle. There, now, you've dropped my fur cloak—dummy!"

Sure enough the fur was lying on the ground; Nastasia had thrown it off her towards the prince, expecting him to catch it, but did not look round: the prince had missed the catch:

"Now then—announce me, quick!"

The prince wanted to say something, but was so confused and astonished that he could not. However, he moved off towards the drawing-room with the cloak over his arm.

"Now, then, where are you taking my cloak to? Ha, ha, ha! Are you mad?"

The prince turned and came back, more confused than ever; when she burst out laughing, he laughed too, but his tongue

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could not form a word as yet. At first, when he had opened the door and saw her standing before him, he had become as pale as death; but now the red blood had rushed back to his cheeks in a torrent.

"Why, what an idiot it is!" cried Nastasia, stamping her foot with irritation. "Go on, do! whom are you going to announce?"

"Nastasia Philipovna," murmured the prince.

"And how do you know that?" she asked him, sharply, "I have never seen you before! Go on, announce me—what's that noise?"

"They are quarrelling," said the prince, and entered the drawing-room.

The prince came into the room at a particularly decisive moment. Nina Alexandrovna had almost forgotten that she had "submitted to everything!" She was defending Varia. Ptitsin was taking her part, too. Not that Varia was afraid of standing up for herself. She was by no means that sort of a girl; but her brother was becoming ruder and more intolerable every moment. Her usual practice in such cases as the present was to say nothing—stop talking altogether—and stare at her brother, without taking her eyes off his face for one instant. This manœuvre, as she well knew, used to drive Gania distracted.

Just at this moment the door opened and the prince entered announcing:

"Nastasia Philipovna!"

IX.

SILENCE immediately fell on all present; all looked at the prince as though they neither understood, nor hoped to understand. Gania was motionless with fright.

Nastasia's arrival was a most unexpected and overwhelming event to all parties. In the first place, she had never been before. Up to now she had been so haughty that she had never even asked Gania to introduce her to his parents; of late she had not so much as mentioned them. Gania was partly glad of this; but still he had put it to her debit in the account to be settled after marriage.

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He would have expected anything sooner than this visit. But one thing seemed to him quite clear—her visit now, and the present of her portrait on this particular day, pointed out plainly enough which way she intended her decision to take!

The incredulous amazement with which all regarded the prince did not last long, for Nastasia herself appeared at the door a moment after and passed in, pushing by the prince again.

"At last I've stormed the citadel! Why do you tie up your bell?" she said, merrily, as she pressed Gania's hand; the latter having rushed up to her as soon as she made her appearance. "What are you looking so surly about? introduce me, please!"

The bewildered Gania introduced her first to Varia, and both women, before shaking hands, exchanged looks of strange import. Nastasia, however, smiled amiably; but Varia did not care to look amiable, and kept her gloomy expression, she did not even vouchsafe the usual courteous smile of etiquette. Gania darted a terrible glance of meaning wrath at her for this. Nina Alexandrovna mended matters a little when Gania introduced her; but hardly had the old lady begun about her 'highly gratified feelings,' and so on, when Nastasia left her and flounced into a chair by Gania's side in the corner by the window, and cried: "Where's your study? and where are the—the lodgers? You do take in lodgers, don't you?"

Gania looked dreadfully put out, and tried to say something in reply, but Nastasia interrupted him:

"Why, where are you going to squeeze lodgers in here? Don't you use a study? Does this sort of thing pay?" she added, turning to Nina Alexandrovna.

"Well, it is troublesome, rather," said the latter; "but I suppose it will 'pay' pretty well. We have only just begun, however—"

Again Nastasia Philipovna did not hear the sentence out; she glanced at Gania, and cried, laughing, "What a face! my goodness, what a face you have on at this moment!"

Poor Gania bore all this with wondering fortitude; his bewilderment and alarmed and comical perplexity passed off, however, and his lips now curved with livid rage as he continued to stare at his laughing guest.

There was another witness of all this, who though standing at the door motionless and bewildered himself, still managed to remark Gania's death-like pallor, and the dreadful change

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in the face of the latter. This witness was the prince, who now advanced in alarm and muttered to Gania:

"Drink some water, and don't look like that!"

It was clear that he came out with these words quite spontaneously and with no particular idea in his head as he said them, on the spur of the moment. But his sally was productive of much—for it appeared that all Gania's rage now overflowed upon the prince; he seized the latter by the shoulder and gazed with the intensity of loathing and revenge at him, but said nothing—as though his feelings were too strong to permit of words.

General agitation prevailed; Nina Alexandrovna gave a little cry of anxiety; Ptitsin took a step forward in alarm; Colia and Ferdishenko stood stock still at the door in amazement;—only Varia remained coolly watching the scene from under her eyelashes, and watching it carefully. She did not sit down, but stood by her mother with folded hands. However, Gania recollected himself almost immediately—he let go of the prince and burst out laughing.

"Why, are you a doctor—prince—or what?" he asked, as merrily and simply as possible, "I declare you quite frightened me! Nastasia Philipovna, let me introduce this invaluable subject to you—though I have only known him myself since the morning."

Nastasia gazed at the prince in bewilderment "Prince? he a prince? Why, I took him for the flunkey, just now, and sent him in to announce me! Ha, ha, ha, isn't that good!"

"Not bad that, not bad at all!" put in Ferdishenko, "*se non e vero—*"

"I rather think I pitched into you, too, didn't I? Forgive me—do! Who is he, did you say? What Prince? Muishkin?" she added, addressing Gania.

"He is a lodger of ours," explained the latter.

"An idiot!"—the prince distinctly heard the word half whispered from behind him; this was Ferdishenko's voluntary information for Nastasia's benefit.

"Tell me, why didn't you put me right when I made such a dreadful mistake just now?" continued the latter, examining the prince from head to foot without the slightest ceremony. She awaited the answer as though convinced that it would be so foolish that she must inevitably fail to restrain her laughter over it.

"I was astonished, seeing you so suddenly—" murmured the prince.

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"How did you know who I was? Where had you seen me before? and why were you so struck dumb at the sight of me? What did you see so overwhelming about me?"

"Oho! ho, ho, ho!" cried Ferdishenko. "*Now* then, prince, my word, what things I would say if I had such a chance as that. My goodness, prince—go on!"

"So should I, in your place, I've no doubt!" laughed the prince to Ferdishenko; then continued, addressing Nastasia, "Your portrait struck me very forcibly this morning; then I was talking about you to the Epanchin's; and then, in the train, before I reached Petersburg, Parfen Rogojin told me a good deal about you; and at the very moment that I opened the door to you I happened to be thinking of you, when—there you stood before me."

"And how did you recognise me?"

"By the portrait!"

"What else?"

"I seemed to imagine you exactly as you are—I seem to have seen you somewhere."

"Where—where?"

"I seem to have seen your eyes somewhere; but it cannot be! I have not seen you—I never was here before; I may have dreamed of you, I don't know."

The prince said all this with manifest effort—in broken sentences and with many drawings of breath; he was evidently dreadfully agitated. Nastasia Philipovna looked at him inquisitively, but did not laugh.

At this moment a loud voice from behind the group, which hedged in the prince and Nastasia Philipovna, divided the crowd, as it were into two, and before them stood the head of the family, General Ivolgin himself. He was dressed in evening clothes, his moustache was "brilliantined." This apparition was too much for Gania. For that had happened at this moment, which for two months had been his nightmare; which had filled his soul with dread and with shame, the meeting between his father and Nastasia Philipovna. He had often tried to imagine such an event, but had found the picture too mortifying and exasperating, and had quietly dropped it. Very likely he anticipated far worse things than was at all necessary, it is often so with vain persons. He had long since determined, therefore, to get his father out of the way, anywhere, before his marriage, in order to avoid such a meeting; but when Nastasia entered the room just now, he had been so overwhelmed with astonishment, that he had not so much as thought of his father,

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and had made no arrangements to keep him out of the way; and now it was too late—there he was, and got up too, in a dress coat and white tie, and Nastasia in the very humour to heap indignities and irony on him and his family circle; of this last fact, he felt quite persuaded. What else had she come for? There were his mother and his sister sitting before her, and she seemed to have forgotten their very existence already; and if she behaved like that, he thought, she must have her own object in view.

Ferdishenko led the general up to Nastasia Philipovna.

"Ardalion Alexandrovitch Ivolgin," said the smiling general, with a low bow of great dignity, "an old soldier, unfortunate, and the father of this family; but happy in the hope of including in that family so exquisitely—"

He did not finish his sentence, for at this moment Ferdishenko pushed a chair up from behind, and the general, not very firm on his legs, at this post-prandial hour, flopped into it backwards. It was always a difficult thing to put this warrior to confusion, and his sudden descent left him as composed as before; he had sat down just opposite to Nastasia, whose fingers he now took, and raised to his lips with great elegance, and much courtesy. The general had once belonged to a very select circle of society, but he had been turned out of it two or three years since on account of certain weaknesses, in which he now indulged with all the less restraint; but his good manners remained to him to this day in spite of all.

Nastasia Philipovna seemed delighted at the appearance of this latest arrival, of whom she had of course heard a good deal by report.

"I have heard that my son—" began Ardalion Alexandrovitch.

"Your son, indeed, a nice papa you are! *you* might have come to see me anyhow, without compromising anyone. Do you hide yourself, or does your son hide you?"

"The children of the nineteenth century, and their parents"—began the general, again.

"Nastasia Philipovna, will you excuse the general for a moment? Someone is inquiring for him," said Nina Alexandrovna in a loud voice, interrupting the conversation.

"Excuse him? oh no, I have wished to see him too long for that. Why, what affairs can he have? he has retired, hasn't he? You won't leave me, general, will you?"

"I give you my word that he shall come and see you himself; but he—he needs rest just now."

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"General, they say you require rest," said Nastasia Philipovna, with the melancholy face of a child whose toy is taken away.

Ardalion Alexandrovitch immediately did his best to make his foolish position a great deal worse.

"My dear, my dear," he said, solemnly and reproachfully, looking feebly at his wife, with one hand on his heart.

"Won't you leave the room, mamma?" asked Varia, aloud.

"No, Varia, I shall sit it out to the end."

Nastasia must have overheard both question and reply, but her vivacity was not in the least damped; on the contrary, it seemed to increase. She immediately overwhelmed the general once more with questions, and within five minutes that gentleman was as happy as a king, and holding forth at the top of his voice, amid the laughter of almost all who heard him.

Colia jogged the prince's arm.

"Can't *you* get him out of the room, somehow? *do*, please," and tears of annoyance ran down the poor boy's cheeks. "Curse that Gania," he muttered, between his teeth, to himself.

"Oh yes, I knew General Epanchin, well," General Ivolgin was saying at this moment, "he and Prince Nicolai Ivanovitch Muishkin—whose son I have this day embraced after an absence of twenty years—and I, were three inseparables, alas! one is in the grave, torn to pieces by calumnies and bullets; another is now before you, still battling with calumnies and bullets—"

"Bullets?" cried Nastasia.

"Yes, here in my chest, I received them at the siege of Kars, and I feel them in bad weather now. And as to the third of our trio, Epanchin, of course after that little affair with the poodle in the railway carriage, it was all UP between us."

"Poodle? what was that? and in a railway carriage? dear me," said Nastasia, thoughtfully, as though trying to recall something to mind.

"Oh, just a silly little occurrence, really not worth telling, about Princess Bielokonski's governess, Miss Smith, and—oh, it is really not worth telling."

"No, no, we *must* have it!" cried Nastasia merrily.

"Yes, of course," said Ferdishenko. "*C'est du nouveau.*"

"Ardalion," said Nina Alexandrovitch, entreatingly.

"Papa, you are wanted," cried Colia.

"Well, it is a silly little story in a couple of words," began the delighted general. "A couple of years ago, soon after the

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railway was opened, I had to go somewhere or other about my retirement, on business. Well, I took a first-class ticket, sat down, and began to smoke, or rather *continued* to smoke, for I had lighted up before. I was alone in the carriage. Smoking is not allowed, but is not prohibited either; it is half allowed so to speak, winked at. I had the window open.

"Suddenly, just before the whistle, in came two ladies with a little poodle, and sat down opposite to me; not bad-looking women; one was in light blue, the other in black silk. The poodle, a beauty with a silver collar, lay on 'light blue's' knee. They looked haughtily about, and talked English together. I took no notice, just went on smoking. I observed that the ladies were getting angry—over my cigar, doubtless. One looked at me through her tortoise-shell eyeglass.

"I took no notice, because they never said a word. If they didn't like the cigar, why couldn't they say so? not a word, not a hint. Suddenly, and without the very slightest suspicion of warning, 'light blue' lays hold of my cigar from between my fingers, and, wheugh! out of the window with it. Well, on flew the train, and I sat bewildered, and the young woman, tall and fair, and rather red in the face, too red, glared at me from opposite, with flashing eyes.

"I didn't say a word, but with extreme courtesy, I may say with most refined courtesy, reached my finger and thumb over towards the poodle, took it up delicately by the nape of the neck, and chucked it out of the window, after the cigar; the train went flying on, and the poodle's yells were lost in the distance."

"Oh, you naughty man!" cried Nastasia, laughing and clapping her hands like a child.

"Bravo!" said Ferdishenko. Ptitsin laughed too, though he had been very sorry to see the general appear; even Colia laughed and said, "bravo."

"And I was right, truly right," cried the general, with warmth and solemnity, "for if cigars are forbidden in the carriages, poodles are much more so."

"Well, and what did the lady do?" asked Nastasia, impatiently.

"She, ah, that's where all the mischief of it lies," replied Ivolgin, frowning. "Without a word, as it were, of warning, she seized me and clawed my cheek—a lunatic, my dear madam, a born lunatic."

"And you?"

The general dropped his eyes, and elevated his brows,

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shrugged his shoulders, tightened his lips, spread his hands, and remained silent. At last he blurted:

"I took it!"

"And did she hurt you?"

"No, oh no!—there was a great flare up, but she didn't hurt me! I only once struggled a little, purely to defend myself, but the very devil was in the business. It turned out that 'light blue' was an Englishwoman, governess or something, at Princess Bielokonski's, and the other woman was one of the old-maid princesses Bielokonski. Well, everybody knows what great friends the princess and Mrs. Epanchin are, so there was a pretty kettle of fish. All the Bielokonskis went into mourning for the poodle, six princesses in tears, and the Englishwoman shrieking!

"Of course I wrote an apology, called and all, but they would not receive either me or my apology, and the Epanchins cut me too!"

"But wait," said Nastasia, "how is it that, five or six days since, I read exactly the same story in the paper, as happening between a Frenchman and an English girl? The cigar was snatched away exactly as you describe, and the poodle was chucked out of the window after it; the scratching came off, too, as in your case; and the girl's dress was light blue!"

The general blushed dreadfully; Colia blushed too—and Ptitsin turned hastily away. Ferdishenko was the only one who laughed as gaily as before. As to Gania, I need not say that he was miserable; he stood dumb and wretched and took no notice of anybody.

"I assure you," said the general, "that exactly the same thing happened to myself!"

"I remember there was some quarrel between father and Miss Smith, the Bielokonski's governess," said Colia.

"How very curious, point for point the same anecdote, and happening at different ends of Europe. Even the light blue dress the same," continued the pitiless Nastasia; "I must really send you the paper."

"You must observe" insisted the general, "that my experience was two years the earlier of the two!"

"Ah! that's it no doubt!"

Nastasia Philipovna laughed hysterically.

"Father, will you hear a couple of words from me outside," said Gania, his voice shaking with agitation, as he seized his father by the shoulder. His eyes shone with the blaze of eternal hate.

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At this moment there was a terrific bang at the door, loud enough to break it down; some most unusual visitor must have arrived. Colia ran to open the door.

X.

THE entrance hall suddenly became full of noise and people; to judge from the sound which penetrated to the drawing-room, a number of people had already come in, and the stampede continued. Several voices were talking and shouting at once; others were talking and shouting on the stairs outside, it was evidently a most extraordinary visit that was about to take place.

Every one exchanged startled glances; Gania rushed out towards the saloon, but a number of men had already made their way into the room and met him.

"Ah! here he is, the Judas!" cried a voice which the prince recognised at once; "how d'ye do, Gania, you old blackguard."

"Yes, that's the man!" said another voice.

There was no room for doubt in the prince's mind: one of the voices was Rogojin's, and the other Lebedeff's.

Gania stood at the door like a block and looked on in silence, putting no obstacle in the way of their entrance, and ten or a dozen men marched in behind Parfen Rogojin. The party was a scampish-looking collection of men, and some of them came in in their furs and caps. None of them were quite drunk, but every one of them appeared to be considerably elevated.

They all seemed to need each other's support, morally, before they dared come in; not one of them would have entered alone, but with the rest each one was brave enough. Even Rogojin paced rather cautiously at the head of his troop; but he was evidently preoccupied, he appeared to be gloomy and morose and had clearly come with some end in view. All the rest was merely chorus, brought in to support the chief character.

Besides Lebedeff there was the dandy Zalesheff, who came in without his top coat and hat; two or three others followed his example, the rest were more uncouth. A couple of "ladies" of some sort put their heads in at the front door but

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did not dare come any further. Colia promptly banged the door in their faces, and locked it.

"How d'ye do, Gania, you blackguard; you didn't expect Rogojin, eh?" said the latter, entering the drawing room, and stopping before Gania.

But at this moment he saw, standing in front of his very nose, Nastasia Philipovna. He had not dreamed of meeting her here, evidently, for her appearance produced a marvellous effect upon him. He grew so white, that his lips became quite blue to look at.

"I suppose it is true, then!" he muttered to himself, and his face took an expression of despair, "so that's the end of it! Now, you, sir, will you answer me or not?" he went on suddenly, gazing at Gania, with a look of ineffable malice. "Now then, you—"

He panted, and could hardly speak for agitation. He advanced into the room mechanically; but perceiving Nina Alexandrovna and Varia he became more or less confused, in spite of his excitement. His followers all entered after him, and all paused a moment at sight of the ladies; of course their modesty was not fated to be long-lived, but at first the sight of the women abashed them. Once let them begin to shout, however, and nothing on earth should disconcert them.

"What, you here too, prince?" said Rogojin, absently, but a little surprised all the same. "Still in your gaiters, eh?" he sighed and forgot the prince next moment, and his wild eyes wandered over to Nastasia again, as though attracted in that direction by some magnetic force.

Nastasia looked on at the new arrivals with great curiosity. Gania recollected himself at last.

"Excuse me, sirs," he said, loudly, "but what does all this mean?" He glared at the advancing hosts generally, but addressed his remarks especially to their captain, Rogojin. "You are not in a stable, gentlemen, though you may think it—my mother and sister are present."

"Yes, I see your mother and sister," muttered Rogojin, through his teeth.

"At all events, I must request you all to step into the 'salon,' said Gania, his rage rising quite out of proportion to his words, "and then I shall inquire—"

"Hoots, he doesn't know me!" said Rogojin, showing his teeth disagreeably, "he doesn't recognise Rogojin," he did not move from his place, however.

"I have met you somewhere, I believe, but—"

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"Met me somewhere, pfu! why its only three months since I lost two hundred roubles of my father's money to you, at cards; the old fellow died before he found out. Ptitsin knows all about it, pfu! Why, I've only to pull out a three-rouble note and show it to you, and you'd crawl on your hands and knees to the other end of the town for it; that's the sort of man you are. Why, I've come now, at this moment, to buy up everything—everything. Oh, you needn't think that because I wear these boots I have no money. I have lots of money, my beauty, —enough to buy up you and all yours together. So I shall, if I like to!

"I'll buy you all up! I will!" yelled Rogojin, growing more and more intoxicated and excited, apparently; "oh, Nastasia Philipovna! don't turn me out! Say the word, do! are you going to marry this man, or not?"

Rogojin asked this question as one lost, as though he were speaking to some divinity, but with the reckless daring of one appointed to die, who has nothing to lose.

He awaited the reply in deadly anxiety.

Nastasia Philipovna gazed at him with a haughty, ironical expression of face; but when she glanced at Nina Alexandrovna and Varia and from them to Gania she changed her tone, all of a sudden.

"Certainly not; what are you thinking of? What could have induced you to ask such a question?" she replied, quietly and seriously, and even, apparently, with some astonishment.

"No? No?" shouted Rogojin, almost out of his mind with joy. "You are not going to, after all? and they told me—oh, Nastasia Philipovna—they said you had promised to marry him, *him!* as if you *could* do it!—*him*—pooh! I don't mind saying it to everyone—I'd buy him off for a hundred roubles, any day, pfu! give him a thousand, or three if he likes, poor devil, and he'd cut and run the day before his wedding, and leave his bride to me! Wouldn't you, Gania, you blackguard? You'd take three thousand, wouldn't you? here's the money, look, I've come on purpose to pay you off and get your receipt, formally, pfu! I said I'd buy you up, and so I will."

"Get out of this, you drunken beast!" cried Gania, who was red and white by turns.

Rogojin's troop, who were only waiting for an excuse, set up a howl at this sally. Lebedeff stepped forward and whispered something in Parfen's ear.

"You're right, clerk," said the latter, "you're right, tipsy spirit—you're right!—Nastasia Philipovna," he added, looking at

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her like some lunatic, harmless generally, but suddenly wound up to audacity-pitch, "here are eighteen thousand roubles, and —and you shall have more—" here he threw a packet of bank notes tied up in white paper, on the table before her.

He did not dare say all he had wished to say.

"No—no—no!" muttered Lebedeff, clutching at his arm. He was clearly aghast at the largeness of the sum, and thought a far smaller amount should have been tried first.

"No, you fool—you don't know whom you are dealing with —and it appears I am a fool too!" said Parfen, trembling beneath the flashing glance of Nastasia. "Oh, curse it all! what a fool I was to listen to you!" he added, with profound melancholy.

Nastasia Philipovna, observing his woe-begone expression, suddenly burst out laughing.

"Eighteen thousand roubles, for me? why, you declare yourself a snob at once," she said, with impudent familiarity, as she rose from the sofa and prepared to go. Gania watched the whole scene with sinking of the heart.

"Forty thousand then—forty thousand roubles instead of eighteen. Ptitsin and another have promised to find me forty thousand roubles by seven o'clock to-night. Forty thousand roubles—paid down on the nail!"

The scene was growing more and more disgraceful; but Nastasia Philipovna continued to laugh and did not go away. Nina Alexandrovna and Varia had both risen from their places and were waiting, silent and frightened, to see what would happen; Varia's eyes were all ablaze with anger; but the scene had a different effect on Nina Alexandrovna, it acted fatally upon her, she paled and trembled and looked more and more like fainting every moment.

"Very well then, a *hundred* thousand! a hundred thousand! down this very day. Ptitsin! find it for me; a good share shall stick to your fingers—come!"

"You are mad!" said Ptitsin, coming up quickly and seizing him by the hand; "you're drunk—the police will be sent for if you don't look out. Think where you are."

"Yes, he's lying like a drunkard," added Nastasia, as though with the sole intention of goading him.

"I do *not* lie! You shall have a hundred thousand, this very day. Ptitsin, get the money, you gay usurer; take what you like for it, but get it by the evening. I'll show that I'm in earnest!" cried Rogojin, working himself up to a rapture of excitement.

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"Come, come; what's all this?" cried General Ivolgin, suddenly and angrily, coming close up to Rogojin. The unexpectedness of this sally on the part of the hitherto silent old man contrasted funnily with the vividness of the scene. Somebody laughed.

"Halloa! what's this now?" laughed Rogojin. "You come along with me, old fellow! You shall have as much to drink as you like."

"Oh, it's too bad!" cried poor Colia, sobbing with shame and annoyance.

"Surely there must be someone among all of you here who will turn this shameless creature out of the room?" cried Varia, suddenly. She was all shaking and trembling with rage.

"That's me, I suppose. *I'm* the shameless creature," cried Nastasia Philipovna, with amused indifference. "Dear me, and I came—like a fool, as I am—to invite them over to my house for the evening. Look how your sister treats me, Gavrila Ardalionovitch."

For some moments Gania stood as if stunned or struck by lightning, after his sister's speech. But seeing that Nastasia Philipovna was really about to leave the room this time, he sprang at Varia and seized her by the hand like a madman.

"What have you done?" he hissed, glaring at her as though he would like to annihilate her on the spot. He was quite beside himself, and could hardly articulate his words for rage.

"What have I done? Where are you dragging me to? Do you wish me to beg pardon of this creature because she has come here to insult our mother and disgrace the whole household, you low, base wretch?" cried Varia, glaring back again at her brother with proud defiance.

A few moments passed as they stood there face to face, Gania still holding her wrist tight in his hand. Varia shuddered once—twice—then could restrain herself no longer, and struck him in the face.

"There's a girl for you!" cried Nastasia Philipovna. "Mr. Ptitsin, I congratulate you on your choice."

Gania lost his head. Forgetful of all and everything he aimed a blow straight at Varia's cheek, which would inevitably have laid her low, but suddenly another hand caught his and warded off the blow.

Between him and Varia stood the prince.

"Enough—enough!" said the latter, with insistance, but all of a tremble with excitement.

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"Are you going to cross my path forever, damn you!" cried Gania; and, loosening his hold on Varia, he aimed a blow at the side of the prince's head with all his force.

Exclamations of fear and horror arose on all sides. The prince grew pale as death; he gazed into Gania's eyes with a strange, wild, reproachful look; his lips trembled and vainly endeavoured to form some words; then his mouth twisted into a totally inconsistent smile.

"Very well—never mind about me; but I shall not allow you to strike her!" he said, at last, quietly; but, suddenly, he could bear it no longer, and covering his face with his hands turned to the wall sobbing, as he murmured, in broken accents:

"Oh! how ashamed you will be of this afterwards!"

Gania certainly did look dreadfully abashed. Colia rushed up to comfort the prince, and after him crowded Varia, Rogojin and all, even the general.

"It's nothing, it's nothing!" said the prince, and again he wore the smile which was so inconsistent with the circumstances.

"Yes, he will be ashamed!" cried Rogojin. "You will be properly ashamed of yourself for having injured such a—such a sheep" (he could not find a better word). "Prince, my dear fellow, leave this and come away with me. I'll show you how Rogojin shows his affection for his friends."

Nastasia Philipovna was also much impressed, both with Gania's action and with the prince's reply.

Her usually thoughtful pale face, which all this while had been so little in harmony with the jests and laughter which she had seemed to put on for the occasion, was now evidently agitated with new feelings, though she tried to conceal the fact and to look as though she were as ready as ever for jesting and irony.

"I really think I must have seen him somewhere!" she murmured seriously enough.

"Oh, aren't you ashamed of yourself—aren't you ashamed? are you really the sort of woman you are trying to represent yourself to be? is it possible?" the prince was now addressing Nastasia, in a tone of reproach, which evidently came from his very heart.

Nastasia Philipovna looked surprised and smiled, but evidently concealed something beneath her smile, and with some confusion and a glance at Gania she left the room.

However, she had not reached the outer hall when she turned sharp round, walked quickly to Nina Alexandrovna, seized her hand and lifted it to her lips.

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"He guessed quite right. I am not that sort of woman," she whispered hurriedly, excitedly, and flushing red all over. Then she turned again and left the room so quickly that no one could imagine what she had come back for. All they saw was that she said something to Nina Alexandrovna in a hurried whisper, and seemed to kiss her hand. Varia, however, both saw and heard all, and watched Nastasia out of the room with an expression of much surprise.

Gania recollected himself in time to rush after Nastasia in order to show her out, but she had gone. He followed her on to the stairs.

"Don't see me down," she cried, "*au revoir*, till the evening —*mind*, do you hear? *au revoir!*"

He returned thoughtful and confused; the riddle lay heavier than ever on his soul. The prince was in a dazed condition; he was so bewildered that he did not even observe Rogojin's rowdy band crowd past him and step on his toes at the door as they went out. They were all talking at once. Rogojin went ahead of the others talking to Ptitsin, and apparently insisting vehemently upon something very important.

"You've lost the game, Gania!" he cried, as he passed the atter.

Gania gazed after him in alarm, but said nothing.

XI.

THE prince now left the room and shut himself up in his own chamber. Colia followed him almost at once, anxious to do what he could to console him. The poor child seemed to be already so attached to him that he could hardly leave him.

"You were quite right to go away!" he said, "the row will rage there worse than ever now; and it's like this every day with us—and all through that Nastasia Philipovna. You think her pretty? I have never seen her until to-day; she has simply blinded me. I could forgive Gania all if only he were marrying her for love; but it's money—it's money—that's the mischief of it!"

"Yes—I don't care for your brother much."

"I should think not, after that. You know, I think it so

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absurd—the idea that some mad fool gives another man a box on the ear, and the assaulted one is dishonoured forever, unless he wipes the insult out with blood. Lermonteff's drama, 'The Masquerade,' is founded on that idea, and I think it a very foolish work, but then he wrote it almost in his boyhood."

"I liked your sister very much."

"Yes—how she smacked Gania's face—what a plucky Varia she is, eh?—she is a noble girl, in spite of her faults. Did you know Nastasia before?"

"Not at all."

"How did it strike you to tell her to her face that she was 'not that sort' of woman? And you guessed right, too, I think. I don't believe she *is* so bad, really! Mother is so pained about you."

"Oh! it's nothing," said the prince.

"How she seemed to obey you, too—"

"Obey me! Who?"

"Why, you asked Nastasia whether she was not ashamed of herself, and she immediately changed all over; you have influence over her, prince."

The door opened at this point, and in came Gania most unexpectedly.

He was not in the least disconcerted to see Varia there (she had come into the room during the prince's conversation with Colia), but he stood a moment at the door, and approached the prince quietly.

"Prince," he said, with feeling, "I was a blackguard, forgive me." His face gave evidence of suffering. The prince was considerably amazed, and did not reply at once. "Oh, come, forgive me, forgive me!" Gania insisted, rather impatiently. "If you like, I'll kiss your hand. There!"

The prince was much struck; he took Gania's hands, and embraced him heartily, while each kissed the other, *à la Russe*.

"I never, never thought you were like that," said the prince, drawing his breath with difficulty; "I thought you—you weren't capable of—"

"Of what? Apologising, eh? Where on earth did I get the idea that you were an idiot? You always observe what other people pass by unnoticed; one could talk sense to you, but—"

"Here is one to whom you should apologise," said the prince, pointing to Varia.

"No, no! they are all enemies; I've tried them often enough, believe me," and Gania turned his back on Varia with these words.

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"But if I beg you to make it up?" said Varia.

"And you'll go to Nastasia Philipovna's in the evening?"

"If you insist: but, judge for yourself, *can* I go, *ought* I to go?"

"But she is *not* that sort of woman, I tell you, pfu!" said Gania, angrily. "She was only acting."

"I know that—I know that; but what a part to play; and think what she must take *you* for, Gania! I know she kissed mother's hand, and all that, but she laughed at you, all the same. All this is not good enough for seventy-five thousand roubles, my dear boy. You are capable of good feelings still, and that's why I am talking to you so. Oh! *do* take care what you are doing. Don't you know yourself that it will end badly, Gania?"

So saying, and in a state of violent agitation, Varia left the room.

"There, they are all like that," said Gania, laughing; "just as if I do not know all about it much better than they do."

He sat down with these words, evidently intending to prolong the visit.

"If you know it so well," said the prince a little timidly, "why do you choose all this worry for the sake of the seventy-five thousand, which, you confess, does not cover it?"

"I didn't mean that," said Gania; "but while we are upon the subject, let me hear your opinion. *Is* all this worry properly paid at seventy-five thousand or not?"

"Certainly not."

"Of course! And it would be a disgrace to marry so, eh?"

"A great disgrace."

"Oh, well, then you may know that I shall certainly do it, now. I shall certainly marry her. I was not quite sure of myself before, but now I am. Don't say a word: I know what you want to tell me—"

"No. I was only going to say that what surprises me most of all is your extraordinary confidence."

"How so? What in?"

"That Nastasia Philipovna will accept you, and that that question is as good as settled; and secondly, that even if she did, you would be able to pocket the money at once. Of course, I know very little about it, but that's my view."

"Of course, you don't know all; but, I assure you, you needn't be afraid, it won't be like that in our case. There are circumstances," said Gania, rather excitedly, "and as to her

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answer to me, there's no doubt about that. Why should you suppose she will refuse me?"

"Oh, I only judge by what I see. Varvara Ardalionovna said so too just now."

"Oh, she—they don't know anything about it. Nastasia was only chaffing Rogojin. I was alarmed at first, but I have thought better of it now; she was simply laughing at him. She'll marry me all right, and if she likes to live quietly, so she shall; but if she gives me any of her nonsense, I shall quietly drop her at once, but I shall keep the money. I'm not going to look a fool, that's the first thing, not to look a fool."

"But Nastasia Philipovna seems to me to be such a *sensible* woman, and, as such, why should she run blindly into this business? that's what puzzles me so," said the prince.

"You don't know all, you see; I tell you there are things—and besides, I'm sure that she is persuaded that I love her to distraction, and I give you my word I have a strong suspicion that she loves me, too—in her own way, of course. She thinks she will be able to make a sort of flunkey of me all my life; but I shall prepare a little surprise for her. I don't know whether I ought to be confidential with you, prince; but, I assure you, you are the only decent fellow I have come across. I have not spoken so sincerely as I am doing at this moment for the last two years; there are uncommonly few honest people about, prince; there isn't one honester than Ptitsin, he's the best of the lot. Are you laughing? You don't know, perhaps, that blackguards like honest people, and being one myself I like you. *Why* am I a blackguard? tell me honestly, now. They all call me a blackguard because of her, and I have got into the way of thinking myself one. That's what is so bad about the business."

"*I* for one shall never think you a blackguard again," said the prince. "I confess I had a poor opinion of you at first, but I have been so joyfully surprised about you just now; it's a good lesson for me. I shall never judge again without a thorough trial. I see now that you are not only not a blackguard, but are not even quite spoiled. I see that you are quite an ordinary man, not original in the least degree, but rather weak."

Gania laughed sarcastically, but said nothing. The prince, seeing that he did not quite like the last remark, blushed, and was silent too.

"Has my father asked you for money?" asked Gania, suddenly.

"No."

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"Don't give it to him if he does. Fancy, he was a decent respectable man once. He was received in the best society; he was not always the liar he is now. Of course, wine is at the bottom of it all; but he is a good deal worse than an innocent liar now. I can't understand how mother is so long-suffering; however, enough for the present, Colia has put his nose in to tell us dinner is ready twice. I'm dining out. I shall come and rave to you now and then; you shall be comfortable enough with us. They are sure to make you one of the family. I think you and I will either be great friends or enemies. Look here now, supposing I had kissed your hand just now, as I offered to do in all sincerity, should I have hated you for it afterwards?"

"Certainly, but not always; you would not have been able to keep it up, and would have ended by forgiving me," said the prince, after a pause for reflection, and with a pleasant smile.

"Oho, how careful one has to be with you, prince. Haven't you put a drop of poison in that remark now, eh? By the way —ha, ha, ha!—I forgot to ask, was I right in believing that you were a good deal struck yourself with Nastasia Philipovna?"

"Ye—yes."

"Are you in love with her?"

"N—no."

"And yet you flush up as red as a rosebud. Come—it's all right. I'm not going to laugh at you. Do you know she is a very virtuous woman? believe it or not, as you like. You think she and Totski—not a bit of it, not a bit of it! not a bit in the world, never. *Au revoir!*"

Gania left the room in great good humour. The prince stayed behind, and meditated alone for a few minutes. At length, Colia popped his head in once more.

"I don't want any dinner, thanks, Colia; I had too good a lunch at General Epanchin's."

Colia came into the room and gave the prince a note; it was from the general and was carefully sealed up. It was clear from Colia's face how painful it was to him to deliver the missive. The prince read it, rose, and took his hat.

"It's only a couple of yards," said Colia, blushing; "he's sitting there over his bottle—and how they can give him credit, I cannot understand. Don't tell mother I brought you the note, prince; I have sworn not to do it a thousand times, but I'm always so sorry for him; don't stand on ceremony, give him some small sum, and there's an end of the matter."

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"Come along, Colia, I want to see your father, I have an idea," said the prince.

XII.

COLIA took the prince to a public-house in the Litaynaya not far off. In one of the side rooms there sat at a table—looking like one of the regular guests of the establishment—Ardalion Alexandrovitch, with a bottle before him, and a newspaper on his knee. He was waiting for the prince, and no sooner did the latter appear than he began a long harangue about something or other; but so far gone was he that the prince could hardly understand a word.

"I have not got a ten rouble note," said the prince; "but here is a twenty-five; change it and give me back the fifteen, or I shall be left without a farthing myself."

"Oh, of course, of course; and you quite understand that I—"

"Yes; and I have another request to make, general; have you ever been at Nastasia Philipovna's?"

"I? I? do you mean me? often, my friend, often. I only pretended I had not in order to avoid a painful subject. You saw to-day, you were a witness, that I did all that a kind, an indulgent father could do; *now* a father of altogether another type shall step into the scene, you shall see; the old soldier shall lay bare this intrigue, or a shameless woman will force her way into a respectable and noble family."

"Yes, quite so. I wished to ask you whether you could show me the way to Nastasia Philipovna's to-night. I *must* go; I have business with her; I was not invited, but I was introduced; anyhow I am ready to trespass the laws of propriety if only I can get in somehow or other."

"My dear young friend, you have hit on my very idea, it was not for this rubbish I asked you to come over here (he pocketed the money, however, at this point), it was to invite your alliance in the campaign against Nastasia Philipovna to-night; how well it sounds, 'General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin,' that'll fetch her, I think, eh? Capital, we'll go at nine; there's time yet."

"Where does she live?"

"Oh, a long way off, near the Great Theatre, just in the square there— It won't be a large party."

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The general sat on and on; he had ordered in a fresh bottle when the prince arrived; this took him an hour to drink, and then he had another, and another, during the consumption of which he told pretty nearly the whole story of his life. The prince was in despair; he felt that though he had but applied to this miserable old drunkard because he saw no other way of getting to Nastasia Philipovna's, yet he had been very wrong to put the slightest confidence in such a man.

At last he rose and declared that he would wait no longer. The general rose too, drank the last drops that he could squeeze out of the bottle, and staggered out into the street.

"I just want to call in for a moment at a house near here, where my spirit sometimes rests after the worries and annoyances of—"

"What, you wish to call in at home?"

"No, no; it's the house of the widow of Captain Terentieff, my old friend and fellow soldier. Oh, Colia, here *you* are already," he added (Colia was waiting at the door, towards which the general was staggering); "come along, prince—"

"It seems to me I was a great fool," murmured the latter, "to come with you at all; however, good-bye now, you are quite drunk I see. I am very glad, indeed, to find you, Colia," he added, turning to the boy, "for I want your help. I must absolutely find Nastasia Philipovna's house; I asked the general to show me the way, but you see his state; do take me there like a good fellow. I know the direction, it's near the Great Theatre—"

"Who? Nastasia Philipovna? She never lived near the Great Theatre. Father never was at her house, if you wish to know the truth. She lives near the Vladimersky, at the 'Five Corners,' which is much nearer. Do you want to go at once? it's half-past nine; come along, I'll take you there by all means."

So the prince and Colia set off together. The prince, alas! had not a farthing to take a droschky with, so they were obliged to walk. It was not far, however, and they soon reached the house.

"A smart one, too," said Colia; "and they have a hall porter; here you are, good luck to you; of course she'll receive you, don't be afraid; there, that's the staircase, the porter will show you up—good-bye."

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XIII.

THE prince was very nervous as he reached and entered the outer door; but he did his best to encourage himself with the reflection that the worst thing that could happen to him would be that he would not be received, or, perhaps, if received then laughed at for coming.

But there was another question, the aspect of which terrified him considerably, and that was: what was he going to do when he *did* get in? and to this question he could fashion no comforting reply.

If only he could find an opportunity of coming close up to Nastasia Philipovna and saying to her: "Don't ruin yourself by marrying this man, he does not love you, he only loves your money, he told me so himself and so did Aglaya Ivanovna, and I have come on purpose to warn you," but even that did not seem quite a legitimate or practicable thing to do. Then, again, there was another delicate question, to which he could not find an answer, dared not, in fact, think of it, but at the very idea of which he trembled and blushed. However, in spite of all his fears and heart quakings he went in, and asked for Nastasia Philipovna.

Nastasia occupied a medium sized, but distinctly tasteful, lodging, beautifully furnished and arranged. At one period of these five years of Petersburg life, Totski had certainly not spared his expenditure upon her. He had calculated upon her eventual love, and tried to seduce her with a lavish expenditure upon her comforts and luxuries, knowing too well how easily the heart accustoms itself to comforts and how difficult it is to tear one's self away from luxuries which have become habitual and, little by little, indispensable.

Nastasia did not reject all this, she even loved her comforts and luxuries, but, strangely enough, never became, in the least degree, dependent upon them, and always gave the impression that she could do just as well without them; in fact, she went so far as to inform Totski on several occasions that such was the case, which the latter gentleman considered a very unpleasant communication indeed.

But, of late, Totski had observed many strange and original features and characteristics in Nastasia, which he had neither known nor reckoned upon in former times, and some of these captivated him, even now, in spite of the fact that all his old

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calculations with regard to Nastasia Philipovna were long ago cast to the winds.

A maid opened the door for the prince (Nastasia's servants were always females) and, to his surprise, received his request to announce him to her mistress without the faintest degree of astonishment. Neither his dirty boots, nor his wide-brimmed hat, nor his sleeveless cloak, nor his evident confusion of manner, produced the least impression upon her. She helped him off with his cloak, and begged him to wait a moment in the ante-room while she announced him.

The company assembled at Nastasia Philipovna's consisted of none but her most intimate friends, and formed a very small party in comparison with her usual gatherings on this anniversary.

In the first place there were present Mr. Totski, and General Epanchin; they were both in a highly amiable mood, but both appeared to be labouring under a half-hidden feeling of anxiety as to the result of Nastasia's deliberation with regard to Gania, which result was to be made public this evening.

Then, of course, there was Gania who was by no means so amiable as his elders this evening; but stood apart, gloomy, and miserable, and silent. He had determined not to bring Varia with him; but Nastasia had not even asked after her. No sooner had he arrived than she had reminded him of the episode between himself and the prince. The general, who had heard nothing of it before, began to listen with some interest, while Gania, drily, but with perfect candour, went through the whole history, including the fact of his apology to the prince. He finished by declaring that the prince was a most extraordinary man, and goodness knows why he had been considered an idiot hitherto, for he was very far from it.

Nastasia listened to all this with great interest; but the conversation soon turned to Rogojin and his visit, and this theme proved of the greatest attraction to both Totski and the general.

Ptitsin was able to afford some particulars as to Rogojin's conduct since the afternoon. He declared that he had been busy finding money for the latter ever since, and up to nine o'clock, Rogojin having declared that he must absolutely have a hundred thousand roubles by the evening. He added that Rogojin was drunk, of course; but that he thought the money would be forthcoming, for the excited and intoxicated rapture of the fellow impelled him to give any interest or premium that was asked of him, and there were several others engaged in beating up the money.

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All this news was received by the company present with gloomy interest. Nastasia was silent and would not say what she thought about it. Gania was equally uncommunicative. The general seemed almost the most anxious of all, and decidedly dispirited; the present of pearls which he had prepared with so much joy in the morning had been accepted but coldly, and Nastasia had smiled rather disagreeably as she took it from him. Ferdishenko was the only person present in good spirits.

Totski himself, who had the reputation of being a capital talker, and was usually the life and soul of these entertainments, was as silent as any on this occasion, and sat in a state of, to him, most uncommon perturbation.

The rest of the guests (an old fellow—a tutor or something, goodness knows why invited; a young man, very timid, and shy and silent; a rather loud woman of about forty, apparently an actress; and a very pretty, well-dressed young girl who hardly said a word all the evening) not only had no gift of enlivening the proceedings, but hardly knew what to say for themselves when addressed. Under these circumstances the arrival of the prince came almost as a godsend.

The announcement of his name gave rise to some surprise and to some smiles, especially when it became evident from Nastasia's astonished look, that she had not thought of inviting him. But her astonishment once over, Nastasia showed such satisfaction, of a sudden, that all prepared to greet the prince with gay and cordial smiles of welcome.

"Of course," remarked General Epanchin, "he does this out of pure innocence; it's a little dangerous, perhaps, to encourage this sort of—freedom; but it is rather a good thing that he has arrived just at this moment, he may enliven us a little with his originalities."

"Especially as he asked himself," said Ferdishenko.

"What's that got to do with it?" asked the general, who loathed Ferdishenko.

"Why, he must pay toll for his entrance," explained the latter.

"H'm! Prince Muishkin is not Ferdishenko," said the general, impatiently. This worthy gentleman could never quite reconcile himself to the idea of meeting Ferdishenko in society, and on an equal footing.

But Nastasia Philipovna had now risen and advanced to meet the prince.

"I was so sorry to have forgotten to ask you to come, when

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I saw you," she said, "and I am delighted to be able to thank you personally now, and to express my admiration for your resolution."

So saying she gazed fixedly into his eyes, longing to see whether she could make any guess as to the explanation of his motive in coming to her house. The prince would very likely have made some reply to her kind words, but he was so blinded and struck by her appearance that he could not open his mouth.

Nastasia noticed this with satisfaction. She was in full dress this evening; and her appearance was certainly calculated to impress all beholders. She took his hand and led him towards her other guests. But just before they reached the drawing-room door, the prince stopped her and hurriedly and in great agitation whispered to her:

"You are altogether perfection; even your pallor and thinness are perfect; one could not wish you otherwise. I did so wish to come and see you. I—forgive me, please—"

"Don't apologise," said Nastasia, laughing; "you spoil the whole originality of the thing. I think what they say about you must be true, that you are so original—so you think me perfection, do you, eh?"

"Yes."

"Hum! Well, you may be a good reader of riddles, but you are wrong *there*, at all events. I'll remind you of this, to-night."

Nastasia introduced the prince to her guests, to most of whom he was already known.

Totski immediately made some amiable remark. All seemed to brighten up at once, and the conversation became general. Nastasia made the prince sit down next to herself.

"Dear me, there's nothing so very curious about the prince dropping in, after all," remarked Ferdishenko.

"It's quite a clear case," said the hitherto silent Gania; "I have watched the prince almost all day, ever since the moment when he first saw Nastasia Philipovna's portrait, at General Epanchin's. I remember thinking at the time what I am now pretty sure of; and what, I may say in passing, the prince confessed to myself."

Gania said all this perfectly seriously, and without the slightest appearance of joking; indeed he seemed strangely gloomy.

"I did not confess anything to you," said the prince, blushing; "I only answered your question."

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"Oh, prince, prince! I never should have thought that of you!" said General Epanchin, "and I imagined you a philosopher! Oh, you silent fellows!"

"Judging from the fact that the prince blushed at this innocent joke, like a young girl, I should think that he must, as an honourable young fellow, harbour the noblest intentions towards our hostess," said the old toothless schoolmaster, most unexpectedly; he had not so much as opened his mouth before. This sally provoked general mirth, and the old fellow himself laughed loudest of the lot, but ended with a stupendous fit of coughing.

Nastasia Philipovna, who loved all originality and drollery of all kinds, was apparently very fond of this old man, and rang the bell for more tea to stop his coughing. It was now half-past ten o'clock.

"Gentlemen, wouldn't you like a little champagne now?" she asked; "I have it all ready; it will cheer us up—do now—no ceremony!"

This invitation to drink, couched, as it was, in such ingenuous terms, came very strangely from Nastasia Philipovna. Her usual entertainments were not quite like this, there was more style about them. However, the wine was not refused; each guest took a glass excepting Gania, who drank nothing.

It was extremely difficult to account for Nastasia's strange condition of mind, which became stranger and stranger each moment, and which none could avoid noticing.

She took her glass, and vowed she would empty it three times that evening; she was hysterical, and laughed aloud every other minute with no apparent reason—the next moment relapsing into gloom and thoughtfulness.

Some of her guests suspected that she must be ill; but concluded at last that she was expecting something anxiously, for she continued to look at her watch impatiently and unceasingly; she was most absent and strange.

"You seem to be a little feverish to-night," said the actress.

"Yes; I feel quite ill. I have been obliged to put on this shawl—I feel so cold," replied Nastasia. She certainly had grown very pale, and every now and then she tried to keep down a trembling in her limbs.

"Had we not better allow our hostess to retire?" asked Totski of the general.

"Not at all, gentlemen, not at all! your presence is absolutely necessary to me to-night," said Nastasia, significantly.

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As most of those present were aware that this evening a certain very important decision was to be taken, these words of Nastasia Philipovna's appeared to be highly significant, and fraught with much hidden interest. The general and Totski exchanged looks; Gania fidgetted convulsively in his chair.

"Let's play at some game!" suggested the actress.

"I know a new and most delightful game," added Ferdishenko.

"What is it?" asked the actress.

"Well, when we tried it we were a party of people, like this for instance; and somebody proposed that each of us, without leaving his place at the table, should relate something about himself; it had to be something that he really and honestly considered the very worst action he had ever committed in his life. But he was to be honest—that was the chief point! he wasn't to be allowed to lie."

"What an extraordinary idea!" said the general.

"That's the beauty of it, general!"

"It's a funny notion," said Totski, "and yet quite natural—it's only a new way of boasting."

"Perhaps that is just what was so bewitching about it."

"Why? it would be a game to cry over—not to laugh at!" said the actress.

"Did it succeed?" asked Nastasia Philipovna. "Come, let's try it, let's try it; we really are not quite so jolly as we might be—let's try it; we may like it, it's original at all events!"

"Yes," said Ferdishenko; "it's a good idea—come along—the men begin, of course no one need tell a story if he prefers to be disobliging. We must draw lots! give me slips of paper, gentlemen, into this hat, and the prince shall draw for turns. It's a very simple game; all you have to do is to tell the story of the worst action of your life. It's as simple as anything, I'll prompt anyone who forgets the rules!"

No one liked the idea much. Some smiled, some frowned, some objected, but faintly, not wishing to oppose Nastasia's wishes; for this new idea seemed to be rather well received by her. She was still in her excited hysterical state, laughing convulsively at nothing and everything. Her black eyes were blazing, and her cheeks showed two bright red spots against the white.

The melancholy appearance of some of her guests seemed to add to her sarcastic strange humour, and perhaps the very cynicism and cruelty of the game proposed by Ferdishenko pleased her; at all events she was attracted by the idea, and gradually

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her guests came round to her side; the thing was original, at least, and might turn out to be amusing. "And supposing it's something that one—one can't well speak about before ladies?" asked the timid and silent young man.

"Why, then of course you won't say anything about it; as if there are not plenty of sins to your score without the need of those," said Ferdishenko.

"But I really don't know which of my actions *is* the worst," said the lively actress.

"Ladies are exempted if they like."

"And how are you to know that one isn't lying? and if one lies the whole point of the game is lost," said Gania.

"Oh, but think how delightful to hear how one's friends lie! besides *you* needn't be afraid, Gania, everybody knows what *your* worst action is without the need of any lying on your part."

"But surely this is a joke, Nastasia Philipovna?" asked Totski; "you don't really mean us to play this game."

"Who ever is afraid of wolves had better not go into the wood," said Nastasia, ironically.

"Well, gentlemen, to business," said Ferdishenko, "put in your slip, ladies and gentlemen—is yours in, Mr. Totski? so—then we are all ready; now, prince, draw please." The prince silently put his hand into the hat, and drew the names, Ferdishenko was first, then Ptitsin, then the general, Totski fifth, his own sixth, then Gania, and so on; the ladies did not draw.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried Ferdishenko, "I did so hope the prince would come out first, and then the general, and so on. Well, gentlemen, I suppose I must give a good example! What vexes me much is that I am such an insignificant creature that it matters nothing to anybody whether I have done bad actions or not! Besides, which am I to choose? it's an *embarras de richesse.* Shall I tell how I became a thief on one occasion only—"

"Do go on, Ferdishenko, and don't make unnecessary preface, or you'll never finish," said Nastasia Philipovna. All observed how irritable and cross Nastasia had become since her last burst of laughter; but none the less obstinately did she stick to her absurd whim about this new game. Totski sat looking miserable enough; the prince lingered over his champagne, and seemed to be thinking of some story for the time when his turn should come.

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XIV.

"I HAVE no wit, Nastasia Philipovna," began Ferdishenko, "and therefore I talk too much perhaps. Were I as witty, now, as Mr. Totski or the general, I should probably have sat silent all the evening, as they have. Now, prince, what do you think?—are there not far more thieves than honest men in this world? Don't you think we may say there does not exist a single person so honest that he has never stolen anything whatever in his life?"

"What a silly idea," said the actress, "of course it is not the case; I have never stolen anything, for one."

"H'm! very well, Daria Alexeyevna; you have not stolen anything—agreed; but how about the prince, now—look how he is blushing."

"I think you are partially right, but you exaggerate the deduction," said the prince, who had certainly blushed up, of a sudden, for some reason or other.

"Ferdishenko—either tell us your story, or be quiet, and mind your own business. You exhaust all patience," cuttingly and irritably remarked Nastasia Philipovna.

"Immediately, immediately! As for my story, gentlemen, it is too stupid and absurd to tell you.

"I assure you I am not a thief, and yet I have stolen; I cannot explain why. It was at Semeon Ivanovitch Ishenka's country house, one Sunday. He had a dinner party. After dinner the men stayed at the table over their wine. It struck me to ask the daughter of the house to play something on the piano; so I passed through the corner room to join the ladies. In that room, on Maria Ivanovna's writing table I observed a three rouble note. She must have taken it out for some purpose, and left it lying there. There was no one about. I took up the note and put it in my pocket; why, I can't say. I don't know what possessed me to do it, but it was done, and I went quickly back to the dining-room and reseated myself at the dinner table. I sat and waited there in a great state of excitement; I talked hard, and told lots of stories, and laughed like mad; then I joined the ladies.

"In half an hour or so the house was up, and the servants were being put under examination. Daria, the maid, was suspected. I exhibited the greatest interest and curiosity in the case, and I remember that poor Daria quite lost her head, and that I be-

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gan assuring her, before everyone, that I would guarantee her forgiveness on the part of her mistress, if she would confess her guilt. They all stared at the girl, and I remember a wonderful attraction in the reflection that here was I sermonizing away, and the money was in my own pocket all the while. . I went and spent the three roubles that very evening at a restaurant. I went in and asked for a bottle of lafite, and drank it up; I wanted to be rid of the money.

"I did not feel much remorse either then or afterwards; but I would not repeat the performance,—believe it or not as you please. There—that's all."

"Only, of course that's not nearly your worst action," said the actress, with evident dislike in her face.

"That was a psychological phenomenon, not a crime," remarked Totski.

"And what about the maid?" asked Nastasia Philipovna, with undisguised contempt.

"Oh, she was turned off next day, of course; it's a very strict household, there!"

"And you allowed it?"

"I should think so, rather! I was not going to return and confess next day," laughed Ferdishenko, who seemed a little struck with the disagreeable impression which his story seemed to have made on all parties.

"How mean you were," said Nastasia.

"Bah! you wish to hear a man tell of his worst actions, and you expect the story to come out goody, goody. One's worst actions always are mean. We shall see what the general has to say for himself now. All is not gold that glitters you know; and because a man keeps his carriage he need not be specially virtuous, I assure you!"

In a word, Ferdishenko was very angry and rapidly forgetting himself; his whole face was drawn up with passion; strange as it may appear, I believe that he had expected much better success for his story. These little errors of taste on Ferdishenko's part occurred very frequently. Nastasia trembled with rage, and glared fixedly at Ferdishenko. The latter immediately "caved in," and relapsed into alarmed silence; he realized that he had gone a little too far.

"Had we not better end this game?" asked Totski.

"It's my turn, but I plead exemption," said Ptitsin.

"You don't care to oblige us?" asked Nastasia.

"I cannot, I assure you; I confess I do not understand how anyone can play this game."

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"Then, general, it's your turn," continued Nastasia Philipovna, "and if you refuse, the whole game will fall through, which will disappoint me very much, for I was looking forward to relating a certain 'page of my own life;' I am only waiting for you and Mr. Totski, to have your turns, for I require the support of your example," she added, smiling.

"Oh, if you put it in that way," cried the general, excitedly, "I'm ready to tell the whole story of my life, but I must confess that I prepared a little story in anticipation of my turn."

Nastasia smiled amiably at the general; but evidently her annoyance and irritability were increasing with every moment. Totski was dreadfully alarmed to hear her promise of a revelation out of her own life.

"I, like everyone else," began the general, "have committed certain not altogether graceful actions, so to speak, during the course of my life. But the strangest thing of all in my case is, that I should consider the little anecdote which I am now about to give you as a confession of the worst of my 'bad actions.' It is thirty-five years since it all happened, and yet I cannot to this very day recall the circumstances without, as it were, a scraping, jarring sensation at the heart.

"It was a silly affair—I was an ensign at the time; you know ensigns—their blood is boiling water, their circumstances generally penurious. Well, I had a servant Nikifor who used to do everything for me in my quarters, economized and managed for me, and even laid hands on anything he could find (belonging to other people), in order to augment our household goods; but a faithful, honest fellow all the same.

"I was strict but just by nature. At that time we were stationed in a small town. I was quartered at an old widow's house, a lieutenant's widow of eighty years of age. She lived in a wretched little wooden house, and had not even a servant, so poor was she.

"Her relations had all died off—her husband was dead and buried forty years since; and a niece, who had lived with her and bullied her up to three years ago, was dead too; so that she lived quite alone.

"Well, I was precious dull with her, especially as she was so aged that there was nothing to be got out of her. Eventually, she stole a fowl of mine; the business is a mystery to this day; but it could have been no one but herself. I requested to be quartered somewhere else, and was shifted to the other end of the town, to the house of a merchant with a large family, and a long beard, as I remember him. Nikifor and I were de-

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lighted to go; but the old lady was not pleased at our departure.

"Well, a day or two afterwards, when I returned from drill, Nikifor says to me: 'We oughtn't to have left our tureen with the old lady, I've nothing to serve the soup in.'

"I asked how it came about that the tureen had been left. Nikifor explained that the old lady refused to give it up, because, she said, we had broken her bowl, and she must have our tureen in place of it; she had declared that I had so arranged the matter with herself.

"This baseness on her part of course roused my young blood to fever heat; I jumped up, and away I flew.

"I arrived at the old woman's house beside myself. She was sitting in the corner all alone, leaning her face on her hand. I fell on her like a clap of thunder. 'You old wretch!' I yelled and all that sort of thing (you all know the Russian language). Well, when I began cursing at her, a strange thing happened; I looked at her, and she raised her face to me and stared with her eyes starting out of her head, but she did not say a word; she seemed to sway about as she sat, and looked and looked at me in the strangest way. Well, I soon stopped swearing and looked closer at her, asked her questions, not a word could I get out of her. The flies were buzzing about the room and only this sound broke the silence; the sun was setting outside; I didn't know what to make of it, so I came away.

"Before I reached home I was met and summoned to the major's, so that it was some while before I actually got there. When I came in, Nikifor met me, 'Have you heard, sir, that our old lady is dead?' '*Dead*, when?' 'Oh, an hour and a half ago.' That meant nothing more nor less than that she had died at the moment I pounced on her and began swearing.

"This produced a great effect upon me. I used to dream of the poor old lonely woman at nights—of how she had once lived so happily amid children's laughter and family voices, and had gradually seen them all go before her and leave her alone—alone, until at last dawned the day for the young ensign to come and frighten the poor old thing to death by swearing at her, all for the sake of a wretched soup tureen. The more I thought of it, the more I felt the weight of it upon my heart; and I never quite got rid of the impression until I put a couple of old women into an almshouse and kept them there at my own expense. There, that's all. I repeat, I daresay I have committed many a grievous sin in my day; but I cannot help

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always looking back upon this episode as the very worst action I have ever perpetrated."

"H'm! and instead of a bad action, your excellence has detailed one of your noblest deeds," said Ferdishenko. "Ferdishenko is 'done.'"

"Dear me, general," said Nastasia Philipovna, absently, "I really never imagined you had such a good heart."

The general laughed with great satisfaction and applied himself once more to the champagne.

It was now Totski's turn, and, by reason of certain circumstances, his story was awaited with great curiosity,—while all eyes turned on Nastasia Philipovna, as though anticipating that his revelation must be connected somehow with the latter. Nastasia, during the whole of his story, pulled at the lace trimming of her sleeve, and never once glanced at the speaker.

"What simplifies the duty before me considerably, in my opinion," began Totski, "is that I am bound to recall and relate the very worst action of my life. In such circumstances there can, of course, be no doubt. One's conscience very soon informs one what is the proper narrative to tell. I admit, that among the many silly and worse incidents of my life that I can recall, one memory comes prominently forward and reminds me that it lay long like a stone on my heart. Some twenty years since, I paid a visit to Platon Ordintzeff at his country house. He had just been elected Marshal of the nobility, and had come down with his young wife to keep the winter holidays. Anfisa Alexeyevna's birthday came off just then, too, and there were two balls arranged. Just at that time Dumas-fils' beautiful work, *La Dame aux Camélias*—a work which I consider imperishable,—had just come into fashion. In the provinces all the ladies were in raptures over it, all those who had read it, at all events. Camellias were all the fashion. Everyone inquired for them, everybody hunted them up; and a grand lot of camellias are to be got in a country town—as you all know—and two balls to provide for!

"Poor Peter Volhofskoi was languishing for Anfisa Alexeyevna. I don't know whether there was anything,—I mean I don't know whether they could possibly have indulged in any hope. The poor fellow was beside himself to get her a bouquet of camellias. Countess Sotski and Sophia Bespalova, as everyone knew, were coming with white camellia bouquets. Anfisa wished for red ones, for effect. Well, her husband Platon was kicked out of the house to find some. Two days before the

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ball, Anfisa's rival snapped up the only red camellias to be had in the place, from under Platon's nose, and Platon—wretched man—was done for—lost—crushed. Now if Peter had only been able to step in at this moment with a red bouquet, his little hopes might have made gigantic strides; but it was not to be done. A woman's gratitude under such circumstances would have been boundless—but it was no go.

"Next day—the day before the ball and birthday—I met Peter. He was radiant. 'What is it?' I ask. 'I've found them, Eureka.' 'No! where, where?' 'At Ekshaisk (a little town fifteen miles off) there's a rich old merchant, lives with a lot of canaries all over the house, has no children, and he and his wife devoted to flowers. He's got some camellias.' 'And what if he won't let you have them?' 'I'll go on my knees and waddle about till I get them. I won't go away.' 'When shall you start?' 'To-morrow morning at five o'clock.' 'Go on,' I said, 'and good luck to you.'

"I was glad for the poor fellow, and went home. But an idea got hold of me somehow. I don't know how. It was nearly two in the morning. I rang the bell and ordered the coachman to be waked up and sent to me. He came. I gave him a tip of fifteen roubles, and told him to get the carriage ready at once. In half an hour it was at the door. I got in and off we went.

"By five I drew up at the Ekshaisky inn. I waited there till dawn, and soon after six I was off, and at the old merchant Trepalof's.

"'Any camellias?' I said, 'father, save me, save me, let me have some camellias!' The old fellow was a tall, grey old man,—a terrible-looking old gentleman. 'Not a bit of it,' he says, 'I won't.' Down I went on my knees, 'Don't say so, don't—think what you're doing,' I say, 'it's a matter of life and death.' 'If that's the case, take them,' says he. So up I go, and cut such a bouquet of red camellias! He had a whole greenhouse full of them—lovely ones. The old fellow sighs. I pull out a hundred roubles. 'No, no!' says he, 'don't insult me that way.' 'Oh, if that's the case, give it to the village hospital,' I say. 'Ah,' he says, 'that's quite a different matter; that's good of you and generous. I'll pay it in there for you with pleasure.' I liked that thoroughly Russian old fellow, Russian to the core, *de la vraie souche.* I went home in raptures, but took another road in order to avoid Peter. I sent the bouquet immediately on arriving at the town, in order to be in time for Anfisa to see when she came down to breakfast.

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"You may imagine her ecstasy, her gratitude. The wretched Platon, who had almost died since yesterday of the reproaches showered upon him, wept on my shoulder. Of course poor Peter had no chance after this.

"I thought he would cut my throat at first, and went about armed ready to meet him. But he took it differently; he fainted, and then went in for high fever and convulsions. A month after, when he had hardly recovered, he was sent off to the Crimea, and there he was shot.

"I assure you this business left me no peace for many a long year. Why did I do it? Was I in love with her myself at that time? If I was, it was not so bad, of course; but I'm afraid it was simply mischief,—pure 'cussedness' on my part.

"If I hadn't snapped up that bouquet from under his nose he might have been alive now, and a happy man. He might have been successful in life, and never gone near the Turks."

Totski ended his tale with the same dignity that had characterized its commencement.

Nastasia Philipovna's eyes were flashing in a most unmistakable way, now; and her lips were all a quiver by the time Totski finished his story.

All present watched both of them with curiosity.

"You were right, Mr. Totski," said Nastasia, "it is a dull game and a stupid one; I'll just tell my story, as I promised, and then we'll play at cards."

"Yes, but let's have the story first!" cried the general.

"Prince," said Nastasia Philipovna, unexpectedly referring to the former, "here are my old friends, Totski and General Epanchin, who wish to marry me off. Tell me what you think. Shall I marry or not? I will do exactly as you tell me."

Totski grew white as a sheet. The general was struck dumb. All present started and seemed to "cock their ears" to listen. Gania sat rooted to his chair.

"Marry whom?" asked the prince, faintly.

"Gavrila Ardalionovitch Ivolgin," continued Nastasia, firmly and evenly.

There were a few seconds of dead silence.

The prince tried to speak but could not form his words; a great weight seemed to weigh down upon his breast and suffocate him.

"N—no! don't marry him!" he whispered at last, drawing his breath with effort.

"So be it, then. Gavrila Ardalionovitch," she spoke

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solemnly and forcibly, "you hear the prince's decision? take it as my decision, then; and let that be the end of the matter for good and all."

"Nastasia Philipovna!" cried Totski, with quaking voice.

"Nastasia Philipovna!" said the general, in persuasive but agitated tones.

Everyone in the room fidgeted in their places, and waited to see what was coming next.

"Well, gentlemen!" she continued, gazing around in apparent astonishment; "what do you all look so alarmed about? and what faces you have all put on."

"But—recollect, Nastasia Philipovna," stammered Totski, "you gave a promise, quite a free one, and—and you might have spared us this. I am confused and bewildered, I know; but, in a word, at such a moment, and before company, and all so—so—irregular, finishing off a game with a serious matter like this, a matter of honour, and of heart, and—"

"I don't follow you, Afanassy Ivanovitch; you are losing your head. In the first place what do you mean by 'before company?' isn't the company good enough for you? and what's all that about a 'game?' I wished to tell my little story, and I told it! don't you like it? You heard what I said to the prince? 'As you decide, so it shall be!' If he had said 'yes,' I should have given my consent! but he said 'no,' so I refused. Here was my whole life hanging on his one word! Surely I was serious enough?"

"The prince! what on earth has the prince got to do with it? Who the deuce is the prince?" cried the general, who could conceal his wrath no longer, and was wild because of the authority given to the prince, past his nose.

"The prince is this to me, that I see in him, for the first time in all my life, a man endowed with real truthfulness of spirit, and I trust him. He trusted me at first sight! and I trust him!"

"It only remains for me, then, to thank Nastasia Philipovna for the great delicacy with which she has treated me," said Gania, as pale as death, and with quivering lips—"that is my plain duty, of course; but the prince—what has he to do in the matter?"

"I see what you are driving at," said Nastasia Philipovna. "You wish to know about the seventy-five thousand roubles—I quite understand you, Mr. Totski, I forgot to say. Take your seventy-five thousand roubles—I don't want them. I let

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you go free for nothing—take your freedom gratis. You must be allowed a little breathing time, after all. Nine years and three months' captivity, goodness me, it's enough for anybody. To-morrow I shall start afresh—to-day I am a free agent for the first time in all my life.

"General, you must take your pearls back, too—give them to your wife—here you are. To-morrow I shall leave this house altogether, and then there'll be no more of these pleasant, little, social gatherings, gentlemen and ladies."

So saying, she scornfully rose from her seat as though to depart.

"Nastasia Philipovna! Nastasia Philipovna!"

The words burst involuntarily from every mouth. All present started up in bewildered excitement, all surrounded her—all who had listened to her wild, disconnected sentences. All felt that something had happened, something had gone very far wrong indeed, but no one could make head or tail of the matter.

At this moment there was a furious ring at the bell, and a great knock at the door—exactly similar to the one which had startled the company at Gania's house in the afternoon.

"Ah, ah! here's the climax at last, half-past twelve," cried Nastasia Philipovna—"sit down, gentlemen, I beg you—a catastrophe is about to happen."

So saying, she reseated herself; a strange smile played on her lips. She sat quite still, but in a fever of impatience, and watched the door.

"Rogojin and his hundred thousand roubles, no doubt of it," muttered Ptitsin to himself.

XV.

KATIA, the maid-servant, made her appearance, terribly frightened.

"Goodness knows what it means, ma'am," she said. "There is a whole collection of men come—all tipsy—and want to see you. They say that 'it's Rogojin, and she knows all about it."

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"It's all right, Katia, let them all in at once."

"Surely not *all*, ma'am? they seem so disorderly—it's dreadful to see them."

"Yes *all*, Katia, all—every one of them; let them in or they'll come in whether you like or no. Listen! what a noise they are making. Perhaps you are offended, gentlemen, that I should receive such a gang of men in your presence? I am very sorry, and ask your forgivness, but it cannot be helped—and I should be very grateful if you could all stay and witness this climax—however, just as you please, of course."

The guests exchanged glances, they were annoyed and bewildered by the episode; but it was clear enough that all this had been pre-arranged and expected by Nastasia Philipovna, and that there was no use in trying to stop her now—for she was little short of insane, if not absolutely mad.

Besides, they were naturally inquisitive to see what was to happen. There was nobody who would be likely to feel much alarm—there were but two ladies present; one of whom was the lively actress, who was not easily frightened, and the other the silent beauty who, it turned out, did not understand a word of Russian, and seemed to be as ponderous as to her wits as she was lovely to look at.

Rogojin's company was very much the same as it had been in the morning, but with one or two additions. None of his band were very drunk, the leader had kept his intended visit to Nastasia in view all day, and had done his best to prevent his followers from drinking too much. He was sober himself, but the excitement of this disorderly day—the strangest day of his life—had affected him so that he was in a dazed, wild condition, which resembled drunkenness.

He had kept but one idea before his mind all day, and for that he had worked and thought in an agony of anxiety and fever of suspense. His lieutenants had worked so hard from five o'clock until eleven, that they actually had collected a hundred thousand roubles for him, but at such terrific expense, that the premium was only mentioned among them in frightened whispers and with bated breath.

As before, Rogojin walked in advance of his troop, who followed him with mingled self-assertion and timidity. They were specially frightened of Nastasia Philipovna herself, goodness knows why.

Rogojin, when he stepped into the room and his eyes fell upon Nastasia Philipovna, stopped short—grew white as a sheet,

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and stood staring; it was clear that his heart was beating painfully. So he stood, staring intently, but timidly, for a few seconds. Suddenly, as though bereft of all judgment, he moved forward, staggering helplessly, towards the table. On his way he collided against Ptitsin's chair, and put his dirty foot on the lovely lace skirt of one of the ladies' dresses; but he neither apologised for nor noticed the fact.

On reaching the table, he place upon it a strange-looking object, which he had carried with him into the drawing-room. This was a paper packet, of some six or seven inches in depth, and eight or nine in length, wrapped in an old newspaper, and tied round three or four times with string.

Having placed this before her, he stood with drooped arms and head, as though awaiting his sentence.

His costume was the same as it had been in the morning, excepting for the addition of a new silk handkerchief round his neck, bright green and red, fastened with a huge diamond pin; and of an enormous diamond ring on his dirty forefinger.

Lebedeff stood two or three paces behind his chief; and the rest of the band waited about near the door.

The two maid-servants were both peeping in through the other door, frightened and amazed at this unusual and disorderly scene.

"What is that?" asked Nastasia Philipovna, gazing intently at Rogojin, and indicating the paper packet with her eyes.

"A hundred thousand," replied the latter, almost in a whisper.

"Oh! so he kept his word—there's a man for you! Well, sit down please—there, take that chair; I shall have something to say to you presently. Who are all these with you? the same band? let them come in and sit down; there's room on that sofa, there are some chairs, and there's another sofa! Well, why don't they sit down?"

Sure enough, some of the brave fellows entirely lost their heads at this point, and retreated into the next room. Others, however, took the hint and sat down, as far as they could from the table, however; feeling braver in proportion to their distance from Nastasia.

Rogojin took the chair offered him, but he did not sit long; he soon stood up again, and did not reseat himself all the rest of the evening.

Little by little he began to look around him and discern the other guests. Seeing Gania, he smiled venomously, and

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muttered to himself, "look at that!" He looked at Totski and the general with no apparent confusion, and with very little curiosity. But when he observed that the prince was seated beside Nastasia Philipovna, he could not take his eyes off him for a long while, and was clearly amazed; he could not account for the prince's presence there. It was not in the least surprising that Rogojin should be, at this time, in a more or less delirious condition; for not to speak of the excitements of the day, he had spent the night before in the railway carriage, and had not slept more than a wink or so for two consecutive nights.

"This, gentlemen, is a hundred thousand roubles," said Nastasia Philipovna, addressing the company in general, "here, in this dirty parcel. This afternoon Rogojin yelled, like a madman, that he would bring me a hundred thousand in the evening, and I have been waiting for him all the while. He was bargaining for me, you know; first he offered me eighteen thousand; then he rose to forty, and then to a hundred thousand; and he has kept his word, see! my goodness, how white he is! All this happened this afternoon, at Gania's. I had gone to pay his mother a visit—my future family, you know! and his sister said to my very face, 'surely somebody will turn this shameless creature out!' after which she boxed her brother Gania's ears, a girl of character that!"

"Nastasia Philipovna," began the general, reproachfully; he was beginning to put his own interpretation on the affair.

"Well, what, general? not quite good form, eh? Oh, nonsense! Here have I been sitting in my box at the French theatre for the last five years like a statue of inaccessible virtue, and kept out of the way of all admirers, like some timid little fawn, and has spoiled me, and taught me whims! Now, there's this fellow, he comes and pays down his hundred thousand on the table, before you all, in spite of my five years of innocence and proud virtue, and I dare be sworn he has his sledge outside in waiting to carry me off. He values me at a hundred thousand! I see you are still angry with me, Gania! why, surely you never really wished to take *me* into your family? *me*, Mrs. Rogojin! what did the prince say just now?"

"I never said you were Mrs. Rogojin—you are *not* Mrs. Rogojin!" said the prince, in trembling accents.

"Nastasia Philipovna, dear soul!" cried the actress, impatiently, "do be calm, dear! if it annoys you so—all this—do go away and rest! of course you would never have this wretched fellow, in spite of his hundred thousand roubles! take his

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money and kick him out of the house, that's the way to treat him and the likes of him!—my word! if it were my business, I'd soon clear them all out!"

The actress was a kind-hearted woman, and highly impressionable. She was very angry now.

"Don't be cross, Daria Alexeyevna!" laughed Nastasia. "I was not angry when I spoke; I wasn't reproaching Gania. I don't know how it was that I ever could have indulged the whim of entering an honest family like his. I saw his mother,—and kissed her hand too. I came and stirred up all that fuss, Gania, this afternoon on purpose to see how much you could swallow—you surprised me, my friend—you did, indeed. Surely you could not marry a woman who accepts a pearl brooch like that you knew the general was going to give me, on the very eve of her marriage? And, Rogojin! why, in your own house and before your own brother and sister, he bargained with me!—yet, you could come here and expect to be betrothed to me before you left the house. You almost brought your sister, too. Surely what Rogojin said about you is not really true: that you would crawl all the way to the other end of the town, on hands and knees, for three roubles?"

"Yes, he would!" said Rogojin, quietly, but with an air of absolute conviction.

"H'm! and he receives a good salary, I'm told. Well, what should you get but disgrace and misery if you took a wife you hated into your family (for I know very well that you do hate me)? No, no! I believe now that a man like you would murder anyone for money—sharpen a razor and come up behind his best friend and cut his throat like a sheep—I've read of such fellows. No, no! I may be shameless, but you are far worse. I don't say a word about that camellia fellow there."

"Nastasia Philipovna, is this really you? You, once so refined and delicate of speech. Oh, what a tongue! What dreadful things you are saying," cried the general, wringing his hands in real grief.

"I am intoxicated, general. I am having a day out, you know—it's my birthday. I have long looked forward to this happy occasion. Daria Alexeyevna, you see that nosegay-man, that *Monsieur aux Camelias*, sitting there laughing at us."

"I am not laughing, Nastasia Philipovna; I was only listening with all my attention," said Totski, with dignity.

"Well, why have I worried him, for five years, and never let him go free? He is only just what he ought to be—

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nothing particular. He thinks I am to blame in his eyes, too. He gave me my education, kept me like a countess. Money—my word! What a lot of money he spent over me; and he tried to find me an honest husband, himself first, and then this Gania, here. And what do you think? all these five years I did not live with him, and yet I took his money, and considered I was quite justified.

"You say, take this hundred thousand and kick that abominable man out. It is true, it is an abominable business, as you say. I might have married long ago, not Gania—Oh, no,—but that was abominable too.

"Would you believe it, I had some thoughts of marrying Totski, four years ago. I meant mischief, I confess—but I could have had him, I give you my word; he asked me himself, but I thought, no! it's not worth while to play such a nasty trick. No! I had better go out into the world, or accept Rogojin, and become a washerwoman or something—for I have nothing of my own, you know. I shall go away and leave everything behind, to the last rag,—he shall have it all back. And who would have me without anything? Ask Gania, there, whether he would. Why, even Ferdishenko wouldn't have me!"

"No, Ferdishenko would not; he is a candid fellow, Nastasia Philipovna," said that worthy, "but the prince would. You sit here whining and hitting about you, but just look at the prince. I've been observing him for a long while."

Nastasia Philipovna looked keenly round at the prince.

"Is that true?" she asked.

"Quite true," whispered the prince.

"You'll have me as I am, with nothing?"

"I will, Nastasia Philipovna."

"Here's a pretty business," cried the general. "However, it might have been expected of him."

The prince continued to regard Nastasia with a sorrowful but intent and piercing gaze.

"Here's another alternative for me," said Nastasia, turning once more to the actress; "and he does it out of pure kindness of heart. I know him. I've found a benefactor. Perhaps, though, what they say about him may be true—that he's an—we know what. And what shall you live on, if you are really so madly in love with Mrs. Rogojin, that you are ready to marry her—eh?"

"I take you for the good, honest woman you are, Nastasia Philipovna,—not as Mrs. Rogojin!"

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"Who; I?—good and honest?"

"Yes, you!"

"Oh, you get those ideas out of novels, you know. Times are changed now, my dear prince; the light shows us things as they really are. It's all nonsense. Besides, how are you to marry—you need a nurse yourself?"

The prince rose and began to speak in a trembling, timid tone, but with the air of a man absolutely sure of the truth of his words.

"I know nothing, Nastasia Philipovna. I have seen nothing. You are right so far; but I consider that you would be honouring me, and not I you—I am a nobody. You have suffered, you have passed through hell, and emerged pure, and that is very much. Why do you shame yourself by desiring to go with Rogojin. You are delirious. You have returned to Mr. Totski his seventy-five thousand roubles, and declared that you will leave this house and all that is in it, which is a line of conduct that not one person here would imitate. Nastasia Philipovna, I love you! I would die for you. I shall never let any man say one word against you, Nastasia Philipovna!—and if we are poor, I can work for both."

As the prince spoke these last words a titter was heard from Ferdishenko; Lebedeff laughed too. The general grunted with irritation; Ptitsin and Totski barely restrained their smiles. The rest all opened their mouths with wonder, and so sat listening.

"But, perhaps we shall not be poor; we may be very rich, Nastasia Philipovna," continued the prince, in the same timid, quivering tones. "I don't know for certain, and I'm sorry to say I haven't had an opportunity of finding out all day, but I received a letter from Moscow, while I was in Switzerland, from a Mr. Salaskin, and he acquaints me with the fact that I am entitled to a very large inheritance. This letter—"

The prince pulled a letter out of his pocket.

"Is he raving?" said the general; "are we really in a madhouse?"

There was silence for a moment or two. Then Ptitsin spoke.

"I think you said, prince, that your letter was from Salaskin? Salaskin is a very eminent man, indeed, in his own world; he is a wonderfully clever solicitor, and if he really tells you this, I think you may be pretty sure that he is right. It so happens, luckily, that I know his handwriting, for I have lately had business with him; if you would allow me to see it, I should perhaps be able to tell you."

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The prince held out the letter silently, but with a shaking hand.

"What, what?" said the general, much agitated; "what's all this? is he really heir to anything?"

All present concentrated their attention upon Ptitsin, reading the prince's letter. The general curiosity had received a new fillip. Ferdishenko could not sit still. Rogojin fixed his eyes first on the prince, and then on Ptitsin, and then back again; he was extremely agitated. Lebedeff could not stand it, he crept up and read over Ptitsin's shoulder, with the air of a naughty boy who expects a whack over the ear every moment for his pains.

XVI.

"IT'S a good business," said Ptitsin, at last, folding the letter and handing it back to the prince. "You will receive, and without the slightest trouble, by the last will and testament of your aunt, a very large sum of money indeed."

"Impossible!" cried the general, starting up as if he had been shot.

Ptitsin explained, for the benefit of the company, that the prince's aunt had died five months since; he had never known her, but she was his mother's own sister, the daughter of a Moscow merchant, one Paparchin, who had died a bankrupt. But the elder brother of this same Paparchin, had been an eminent and very rich gentleman indeed. A year since it had so happened that his only two sons had both died within the same month.

This sad event had so affected the old man that he, too, had died very shortly after. He was a widower, and had no relations left, excepting the prince's aunt, a poor woman living on charity, and who was herself at the point of death from dropsy; but who had time before she died to set Salaskin to work to find her nephew, and to make her will bequeathing her newly acquired fortune to the latter.

It appeared that neither the prince nor the doctor with whom he lived in Switzerland had thought of waiting for official communications; but the prince had started straight away with Salaskin's letter in his pocket.

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"One thing I may tell you, for certain," concluded Ptitsin, addressing the prince, "that there is no question about the authenticity of this matter. Anything that Salaskin writes you as regards your unquestionable right to this inheritance, you may look upon as being as good as so much money in your pocket. I congratulate you, prince; you may receive a million and a half of roubles, perhaps more, I don't know. All I *do* know is that Paparchin was known to be a very rich merchant indeed."

"Hurrah!" cried Lebedeff, in a drunken voice. "Hurrah, for the last of the Muishkins!"

"My goodness me! and I gave him twenty-five roubles this morning as though he were a beggar," blurted the general, half senseless with amazement and surprise. "Well, I congratulate you, I congratulate you;" and the general rose from his seat and solemnly embraced the prince. All came forward with congratulations; even those of Rogojin's party who had retreated into the next room, now crept softly back to look on. For the moment even Nastasia Philipovna was forgotten.

But gradually the consciousness crept back into the minds of each one present that the prince had just made an offer of marriage to the former lady. The question had, therefore, become three times as wild and fantastic as before.

Totski sat and shrugged his shoulders, bewildered. He was the only guest left sitting at this time; all the others had thronged round the table in disorder, and were all talking at once.

It was generally agreed, afterwards, in recalling that time, that it was from this moment that Nastasia Philipovna seemed entirely to have lost her head. She continued to sit still in her place, looking around at her guests with a strange, bewildered expression, as though she were trying to collect her thoughts, and could not. Then she suddenly turned to the prince, and glared at him with frowning brows; but this only lasted one moment; perhaps it suddenly struck her that all this was a jest, a joke, I don't know; she reflected, and smiled, but as though ignorant of the cause of her mirthful feeling.

"So I am really a princess," she whispered to herself, ironically, and glancing accidently, at the moment, at Daria Alexeyevna's face, she burst out laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!" she cried, "this is an unexpected climax, after all. I didn't expect this; what are you all standing up for, gentlemen? sit down, congratulate me and the prince. Ferdishenko, just step out and order some more champagne, will you? Katia, Pasha," she added, suddenly, seeing the

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servants at the door, "come here, I'm going to be married, did you hear? to the prince, he has a million and a half of roubles; he is Prince Muishkin, and has asked me to marry him. Here, prince, come and sit by me, here; so, and here comes the wine; now then, ladies and gentlemen, where are your congratulations?"

"Hurrah!" cried a number of voices. A rush was made for the wine; Rogojin stood and looked on, with an incredulous smile, screwing up one side of his mouth.

"Prince, my dear fellow, do remember what you are about," said the general, approaching his side, and dragging him by the coat sleeve.

Nastasia Philipovna overheard the remark, and burst out laughing.

"No, no, general!" she cried, "you had better look out for yourself, I am the princess now, you know; the prince won't let you insult me. Mr. Totski, why don't you congratulate me? I shall be able to sit at table with your new wife, now. Aha! you see what I gain by marrying a prince. A million and a half, and a prince, and an idiot into the bargain, they say. What better could I wish for? life is only just about to commence for me in earnest. Rogojin, you are a little too late; away with your paper parcel, I'm going to marry the prince; I'm richer than you are myself."

But Rogojin understood how things were tending at last. An inexpressibly painful expression came over his face. He wrung his hands, a groan made its way up from the depth of his soul.

"Surrender her, for God's sake." he said to the prince.

All around burst out laughing.

"What? surrender her to *you?*" cried Daria Alexeyevna, "pooh, to a fellow who comes and bargains for a wife like that, you moujik. The prince wishes to marry her, and you—"

"So do I, so do I, this moment, if I could. I'd give every farthing I have to do it."

"You drunken moujik," said Daria Alexeyevna, once more, "you ought to be kicked out of the place,"

The laugh became louder than ever.

"Do you hear, prince?" said Nastasia Philipovna, "do you hear how this moujik of a fellow goes on bargaining for your bride?"

"He is drunk," said the prince, quietly, "and he loves you very much."

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"Won't you be ashamed, afterwards, to reflect that your wife very nearly ran away with Rogojin?"

"Oh, you were raving, you were in a fever; you are still half delirious."

"And won't you be ashamed when they tell you, afterwards, that your wife lived at Totski's expense so many years?"

"No; I shall not be ashamed of that, you did not so live by your own will."

"And you'll never reproach me with it?"

"Never."

"Take care, don't commit yourself for a whole lifetime."

"Nastasia Philipovna," said the prince, quietly, and with deep emotion and sympathy, "I said before that I shall esteem your consent to be my wife as a great honour to myself, and shall consider that it is you who will honour me, not I—you, by our marriage. You laughed at these words; and others around us laughed as well; I heard them. Very likely I expressed myself funnily, and I may have looked funny myself, but, for all that, I believe I understand where the path of honour lies, and what I said was but the literal truth. You were about to ruin yourself just now, irrevocably; you would never have forgiven yourself for so doing afterwards; and yet, you are absolutely blameless. It is impossible that your life should be altogether blasted at your age.

"What matter that Rogojin came bargaining here, and that Gavrila Ardalionovitch would have deceived you if he could? why do you continually remind us of these facts? I assure you once more that very few could find it in them to act as you have acted this day. As for your wish to go with Rogojin, that was simply the last wild idea of a delirious and suffering brain. You are still quite feverish, you ought to be in bed, not here. You know quite well that if you had married Rogojin, you would have become a washer-woman at once, rather than stay with him. You are proud, Nastasia Philipovna, and perhaps you have really suffered so much that you imagine yourself to be a desperately guilty woman. You require a deal of petting and looking after, Nastasia Philipovna, and I will do this. I saw your portrait this morning, and it seemed quite a familiar face to me; it seemed to me that the portrait-face was calling to me for help. I—I shall respect you all my life, Nastasia Philipovna," concluded the prince, as though suddenly recollecting himself, and blushing to think of the sort of company before whom he had said all this. Ptitsin bowed his head and looked at

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the ground, overcome with a mixture of feelings. Totski muttered to himself: "He may be an idiot, but he knows that flattery is the best road to success here."

The prince observed Gania's eyes flashing out of his corner, as though Gania would gladly annihilate him then and there.

"That's a kind-hearted man if you like," said Daria Alexeyevna, whose wrath was quickly evaporating.

"An educated man, but—lost," murmured the general.

Totski took his hat and rose to go. He and the general exchanged glances, making a private arrangement, thereby, to leave the house together.

"Thank you, prince; no one has ever spoken to me like that before," began Nastasia Philipovna. "Men have always bargained for me, before this; and not a single respectable fellow has ever proposed for my hand as a respectable man should. Do you hear, Mr. Totski? what do *you* think of what the prince has just been saying? It was really quite modest and respectful, wasn't it? You, Rogojin, wait a moment, don't go yet; I see you don't intend to move, however. Perhaps I may go with you yet. Where did you mean to take me to?"

"To Ekaterinhof," replied Lebedeff from his place. Rogojin did nothing, but stood staring, with trembling lips, not daring to believe his ears. He was perfectly stunned, as though from a mighty blow on the head.

"What are you thinking of, my dear Nastasia," said Daria Alexeyevna. "What are you saying? you are not going mad, are you?" She was frightened out of her wits.

Nastasia Philipovna burst out laughing and jumped up from her sofa.

"You thought I should immediately accept this good fellow's invitation to ruin him, did you?" she cried. "That's Totski's way, not mine. Come along, Rogojin, get your money ready. We won't talk about marrying just this moment, but let's see the money at all events. Come; I may not marry you either, I don't know. Ha, ha, ha! nonsense! I have no sense of shame left. I tell you I have lived at Totski's expense. Prince, you must marry Aglaya Epanchin, not Nastasia Philipovna; why, if you did, this fellow Ferdishenko here would always be pointing the finger of scorn at us. You aren't afraid, I know; but I should always be afraid that I had ruined you, and that you would reproach me for it. As for what you say about my doing you honour by marrying you—well, Totski can tell you all about that. You had your eye on

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Aglaya, Gania, you know you had; and you might have married her if you had not come bargaining here. You are all like this; look at the general how he's staring at me."

"My word, this is too bad," said the general, starting to his feet. All were standing up now. Nastasia was perfectly beside herself.

"I am very proud, in spite of what I am," she continued, "you called me 'perfection' just now, prince; a nice sort of perfection to throw up a prince and a million and a half of roubles in order to be able to boast of the fact afterwards. What sort of a wife should I make for you, after all I have said? Mr. Totski, do you observe I have really and truly pitched a million of roubles out of the window. And you thought that I should consider your wretched seventy-five thousand, with Gania thrown in for a husband, a paradise of bliss. Take your seventy-five thousand back, sir; you did not reach the hundred thousand. Rogojin cut a better dash than you did. I'll console Gania myself, I have an idea about that. Now I must be off; I've been in prison for ten years; I'm free at last, wheugh! Well, Rogojin, what are you waiting for? Let's get ready and go."

"Come along!" shouted Rogojin, beside himself with joy. "Hey! all of you fellows! wine! round with it! fill the glasses."

"Take some with you. Is there to be music?"

"Yes, yes, get away!" shouted Rogojin, observing that Daria Alexeyevna was approaching to protest against Nastasia's conduct. Get away, she's mine, everything's mine. She's a queen, get away."

He was panting with ecstasy. He walked round and round Nastasia Philipovna and told everybody to "keep their distance."

All the Rogojin company were now collected in the drawing-room; some were drinking, some laughed and talked; all were in the highest and wildest spirits; Ferdishenko was doing his best to unite himself to them; the general and Totski again made an attempt to get away. Gania, too, stood hat in hand ready to go; but seemed to be unable to tear his eyes away from the picture being enacted before them.

"Get out, keep your distance!" shouted Rogojin.

"What are you shouting about there!" cried Nastasia. "I'm not yours yet. I may kick you out for all you know. I haven't taken your money yet; there it all is on the table. Here, give me over that packet? Is there a hundred thousand roubles in that one packet? Pfu! what abominable stuff

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it looks. Oh! nonsense, Daria Alexeyevna; you surely did not expect me to ruin *him?*" (indicating the prince). "Fancy him nursing me! Why, he needs a nurse himself. The general, there, will be his nurse now, you'll see. Here, prince, look here; your bride is accepting money. What a disreputable woman she must be; and you wished to marry her. What are you crying about; is it a bitter dose? Never mind, you shall laugh yet, trust to time." (In spite of these words there were two large tears rolling down Nastasia's own cheeks.) "It's far better to think twice of it now than afterwards. Oh! you mustn't cry like that. There's Katia crying too. What is it, Katia, dear. I shall leave you and Pasha a lot of things, I've laid them out for you already; but good-bye, now. I made an honest girl like you serve a disreputable woman like myself. It's better so, prince, it is indeed; you'd begin to despise me afterwards—we should never be happy. Oh! you needn't swear, prince, I sha'n't believe you, you know; how foolish it would be, too. No, no; we'd better say good-bye and part friends. Do you know, very often during those five years down at his estate I used to think and think, and I always imagined just such a good, honest, foolish fellow as you for myself, one who should come and say to me: 'You are an innocent woman, Nastasia Philipovna, and I adore you.' I assure you I thought of you often. I used to think so much down there that I nearly went mad; and then this fellow here (Totski), used to come down; he would stay a couple of months out of the twelve, and disgrace and offend and deprave me, and then go; so that I longed to drown myself in the pond a thousand times over; but I did not dare do it; I hadn't the heart, and now—well, are you ready, Rogojin?"

"Ready—keep your distance, all of you."

"We're all ready," said several of his friends.

"The Troikas* are at the door, bells and all."

Nastasia Philipovna seized the packet of bank notes.

"Gania, I have an idea. I wish to recompense you—why should you lose all? Rogojin, would he crawl for three roubles as far as the Vassili ostrof?"

"Oh, wouldn't he just!"

"Well, look here, Gania. I wish to look into your heart once more, for the last time. You've worried me for the last three months—now it's my turn. Do you see this packet? it contains a hundred thousand roubles. Now, I'm going to throw it into the fire, here—before all these witnesses. As

* Sledges drawn by three horses abreast.

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soon as the fire catches hold of it, you climb into the fire-place and pick it out—without gloves, you know. You must have bare hands, and you must turn your sleeves up; fist it out, I say, and it's all yours. You may burn your fingers a little, of course; but then it's a hundred thousand roubles, remember—it won't take you long to lay hold of it and snatch it out. I shall fall in love with you if you climb into the fire for my money. All here present may be witnesses that the whole packet of money is yours if you fist it out; if you don't get it out, it shall burn. I will let no one else come; away—get away, all of you—it's my money! Rogojin has bought me with it; is it my money, Rogojin?"

"Yes, my queen; it's your own money, my joy."

"Get away then, all of you; I shall do as I like with my own—don't bother me. Ferdishenko, make up the fire, quick."

"Nastasia Philipovna, I can't; my hands won't obey me," said Ferdishenko, astounded and helpless with bewilderment.

"Nonsense," cried Nastasia Philipovna, seizing the poker and raking a couple of logs together. No sooner did a little tongue of fire burst out than she threw the packet of notes upon it.

A cry arose—everyone gasped; some even crossed themselves.

"She's mad—she's mad!" was the cry.

"Oughtn't—oughtn't we to secure her?" asked the general of Ptitsin, in a whisper; "or shall we send for the authorities? Why, she's mad, isn't she—isn't she, eh?"

"N—no, I hardly think she is actually mad," whispered Ptitsin, who was as white as his handkerchief, and trembling like a leaf; he could not take his eyes off the smouldering packet.

"She's mad surely, isn't she?" the general appealed to Totski.

"I told you she wasn't an ordinary woman," replied the latter, who was as pale as any one.

"Oh, but, positively, you know—a hundred thousand roubles!"

"Goodness gracious! good heavens!" came from all quarters of the room.

All now crowded round the fire and thronged to see what was going on; everyone lamented and gave out exclamations of horror and woe. Some jumped up on the chairs in order to get a better view. Daria Alexeyevna ran into the next room

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and whispered excitedly to Katia and Pasha. The beautiful German disappeared altogether.

"My mother! my sovereign!" lamented Lebedeff, crawling about on his knees before Nastasia Philipovna, and stretching out his hands towards the fire; "it's a hundred thousand roubles, it is indeed, I packed it up myself, I saw the money, my mother, let me get into the fire after it—say the word—I'll put my whole grey head into the fire for it. I have a poor lame wife and thirteen children. Nastasia Philipovna, Nastasia Philipovna," the wretched little man wept, and groaned, and crawled towards the fire.

"Away, out of the way!" cried Nastasia, "make room, all of you. Gania, here, what are you standing there for? climb in, don't stand on ceremony, in you go, there's your whole happiness smouldering away, look, quick."

But Gania had borne too much that day, and especially this evening, and he was not prepared for this last, quite unexpected trial.

The crowd parted on each side of him and he was left face to face with Nastasia Philipovna, three paces from her. She stood at the fire and waited, fixing her intent and fiery gaze upon him.

Gania stood before her, dressed in his evening clothes and white gloves, hat in hand, speechless and motionless, with hands folded and eyes fixed on the fire.

A silly, meaningless smile played on his white, death-like lips He *could* not take his eyes off the smouldering packet; but it appeared that something new—some new idea, had made itself felt in his inner soul—as though he were vowing to himself that he would bear this trial. He did not move from his place. In a minute or two it became evident to all that he did not intend to rescue the money.

"Hey! look at it, it'll burn in another minute or two!" cried Nastasia Philipovna. "You'll hang yourself afterwards, you know, if it does; I'm not joking."

The fire, choked between a couple of smouldering pieces of wood, for the first few moments after the packet was thrown upon it, had been torpid and sluggish. But a little tongue of fire had now begun to lick the paper from below, and soon, gathering courage, mounted the sides of the parcel, and licked it round about. In another moment, the whole of it burst into flames, and lighted up the entire grate. The exclamations of woe and horror were redoubled.

"Nastasia Philipovna," lamented Lebedeff again, straining

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towards the fireplace; but Rogojin dragged him away, and pushed him to the rear once more.

The whole of Rogojin's being was concentrated in one rapturous gaze of ecstasy. He could not take his eyes off Nastasia. He stood drinking her in, as it were. He was in the seventh heaven of delight.

"Oh, what a queen she is!" he ejaculated, every other minute, throwing out the remark for anyone who liked to catch it. "That's the sort of woman for me. Which of you would think of doing a thing like that, you blackguards, eh?" he yelled; he was hopelessly and wildly beside himself with ecstasy.

The prince watched the whole scene, silent and dejected.

"I'll pull it out with my teeth for one thousand, come!" said Ferdishenko.

"So would I," said another, from behind, "with pleasure—devil take the thing!" he added, in a tempest of despair, "it will all be burnt up in a minute—it's burning, it's burning!"

"It's burning, it's burning!" cried all, thronging nearer and nearer to the fire in their excitement.

"Gania, don't be a fool! I tell you for the last time."

"Get in, quick!" shrieked Ferdishenko, rushing wildly up to Gania, and trying to drag him to the fire by the sleeve of his coat, "get in, you dummy, it's burning away fast. Oh—*damn* the thing!"

Gania hurled Ferdishenko from him; then he turned sharp round and made for the door. But he had not gone a couple of steps when he tottered and fell to the ground.

"He's fainted," the cry went round.

"And the money's burning still," Lebedeff lamented.

"Burning for nothing," sobbed others.

"Katia—Pasha! bring him some water," cried Nastasia Philipovna. Then she took the tongs and fished out the packet.

Nearly the whole of the outer covering was burned away, but it was soon evident that the contents were hardly touched. The packet of notes had been wrapped in a threefold covering of newspaper, and the money was safe. All breathed more freely.

"Some dirty little thousand or so may be touched," said Lebedeff, immensely relieved, "but there's very little harm done after all."

"It's all his—the whole packet is for him, do you hear—all of you?" cried Nastasia Philipovna, placing the packet by the side of Gania. "He restrained himself, and didn't go after it; so his self-respect is greater than his thirst for money. All

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right—he'll come to directly—he must have the packet or he'll cut his throat afterwards—there! he's coming to himself. General, Totski, all of you, did you hear me?—the money is all Gania's, I give it to him, fully conscious of my action, as recompense—for, well, anything he thinks best. Tell him so. Let it lie here beside him. Off we go, Rogojin. Good-bye, prince. I have seen a man for the first time in my life. Good-bye, Mr. Totski. Thanks."

The Rogojin gang followed their leader and Nastasia Philipovna to the entrance-hall with laughing and shouting and whistling.

In the hall the servants were waiting, and handed her her fur cloak. Martha, the cook, ran in from the kitchen; Nastasia kissed them all round.

"Are you really throwing us all over, little mother? where, where are you going to? and on your birthday, too," cried the four girls crying over her and kissing her hands.

"I am going out to the world, Katia; perhaps I shall be a laundress, I don't know. No more of Mr. Totski, anyhow. Give him my respects. Don't think badly of me, girls."

The prince hurried down to the front gate where the party were settling into the troikas, all the bells tinkling a merry accompaniment the while. The general caught him up on the stairs:

"Prince, prince!" he cried, seizing hold of his arm, "recollect yourself. Drop her, prince, you see what sort of a woman she is. I am speaking to you like a father."

The prince glanced at him, but said nothing. He shook himself free, and rushed on downstairs.

The general was just in time to see the prince take the first sledge he could get, and, giving the order to Ekaterinhof, start off in pursuit of the troikas. Then the general's fine grey horse dragged that worthy home, with some new thoughts, and some new hopes and calculations developing in his brain, and with the pearl brooch in his pocket, for he had not forgotten to bring it along with him, being a man of business. Amid his new thoughts and ideas there came, once or twice, the image of Nastasia Philipovna. The general sighed.

"I'm sorry, really sorry," he muttered, "she's a ruined woman; mad! mad! However, the prince will not want Nastasia Philipovna now,—perhaps—"

Two more of Nastasia's guests, who walked a short distance together, indulged in equally high moral sentiments as regards their hostess.

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"Do you know, Mr. Totski, this is all very like what they say goes on among the Japanese?" said Ptitsin. "The offended party there, they say, marches off to his insulter and says to him, 'you insulted me, so I have come to rip myself up before your eyes;' and with these words he does actually rip himself up before the other's very eyes, and considers, doubtless, that he is having every possible and necessary satisfaction and revenge.

"There are strange characters in the world, sir."

"H'm! and you think there was something of this sort here, do you? dear me—a very remarkable comparison, do you know. But you must have observed, my dear Mr. Ptitsin, that I did all I possibly could. I could do no more than I did. We must admit the dignity of the woman. My word—with that beauty of hers, and her character—what might she not have been! Of course my justification lies in her own conduct, that is quite clear; and then to go away with that fellow Rogojin,—it was all ephemeral—all romance, of course,—I know, but think of her education, her beauty—all—and now she's utterly ruined!" And Totski sighed deeply.

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PART II.

I

TWO days after the strange conclusion to Nastasia Philipovna's birthday party, with the record of which we concluded the first part of this story, Prince Muishkin hurriedly left St. Petersburg for Moscow, in order to see after business connected with the receipt of his unexpected fortune.

It was said that there were other reasons for his hurried departure; but as to this, and as to his movements in Moscow, and as to his prolonged absence from St. Petersburg, we are able to afford very little information.

The prince was away exactly six months, and even those who were most interested in his destiny were able to pick up very little news about him all that while. True, certain rumours did reach his friends, but these were both strange and rare, and each one contradicted the last.

Of course the Epanchin family was most interested in his movements; he had not had time to bid them all farewell on his departure. The general, however, had had an opportunity of seeing him once or twice since the eventful evening, and had spoken very seriously with him; but though he had seen the prince, as I say, yet he told his family nothing about the circumstance. In fact, for a month or so after his departure it was considered not the thing to mention the prince's name in the Epanchin household. Only Mrs. General, at the commencement of the period, had once announced that she had been "cruelly mistaken in the prince!" and a day or two after, she had added, evidently alluding to him, but not mentioning his name, that it was an unalterable characteristic in her life to be mistaken in people. Then once more, ten days later, after some passage of arms with one of her daughters, she had remarked sententiously:

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"Well, enough of mistakes, I shall be more careful in future!" However, it was impossible to avoid remarking that there was something unhinged about the household—something wrong, unspoken, but felt; something strained; all the members of the family looked black and were sulky. The general was unusally busy, his family hardly ever saw him.

As to the girls, nothing was said aloud, at all events; and probably very little in private. They were a proud set of damsels, and were not always perfectly confidential even among themselves; but they understood each other thoroughly at the first word on all occasions; very often at the first glance, so that there was no need of much talking as a rule.

One fact, at least, would have been perfectly plain to an outsider, had any such person been on the spot; and that was, that the prince had made a very considerable and strange impression upon the family, in spite of the fact that he had but once been inside the house, and that only for a short time. Of course, if analysed, this impression might have proved to be nothing more than a feeling of curiosity; but be it what it might, there it undoubtedly was.

Little by little the rumours spread about town became wrapped in the gloom of uncertainty. It was said that some foolish young prince, name unknown, had suddenly come into possession of a gigantic fortune, and had married a French ballet dancer; this was contradicted, and the rumour circulated that it was a young merchant who had come into the enormous fortune and married the great ballet dancer, and that at the wedding the drunken young fool had burned seventy thousand roubles at a candle out of pure bravado.

However, all these rumours soon died down, to which circumstance certain facts contributed largely. For instance, the whole of the Rogojin troop had departed, with him at their head, for Moscow; this was exactly a week after the dreadful orgie at the Ekaterinhof gardens, where Nastasia Philipovna had assisted. It became known that after this orgie Nastasia Philipovna had entirely disappeared, and that she had since been traced to Moscow; so that the exodus of the Rogojin band was found consistent with this report.

There were rumours current as to Gania, too; but circumstances soon contradicted these. He had fallen seriously ill, and his illness precluded his appearance in society, and even at business for over a month. As soon as he had recovered, however, he threw up his situation in the public company, under General Epanchin's direction, for some unknown reason, and

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the place was given to another. He never went near the Epanchin's house at all.

Varvara Ardalionovna married Ptitsin this winter, so it became known that the fact of Gania's retirement from business was the ultimate cause of the marriage, since Gania was now not only unable to support his family, but even required help himself.

We may mention that Gania was no longer mentioned in the Epanchin household any more than the prince was; but that a certain circumstance in connection with the fatal evening at Nastasia's house became known to the general, and, in fact, to all the family the very next day. This fact was that Gania had come home that night, but had refused to lie down. He had waited the prince's return from Ekaterinhof with feverish impatience.

On the latter's arrival, Gania had found him in his room, and brought with him the singed packet of money, which he had insisted that the prince should return to Nastasia Philipovna without delay. It was said that when Gania entered the prince's room, he came with anything but friendly feelings, and in a condition of despair and misery; but that after a few words conversation with the prince, he had stayed on and talked for a couple of hours, sobbing continuously and bitterly the whole while; and had departed upon terms of cordial friendship.

The Epanchins knew all about the episode at Nastasia Philipovna's house, in every detail; it was strange that this should have been the case. Less strange was it that Gania's action, as just recorded, should be known to them, because, since that time, his sister Varia had become a great friend of the family, for some reason of her own. She was not a favourite of Mrs. General's however, who ascribed her daughter's affection for Varia to mere contrariness. But a month or two later, Mrs. Epanchin received a letter from her old friend Princess Bielokonski (who had lately left for Moscow), which letter put her into the greatest good humour. She did not divulge its contents to either her daughters or the general, but her conduct towards the former became affectionate in the extreme. She even began to patronise the general again, a little—he had been long disgraced, and though she managed to quarrel with them all before evening, yet she soon came round, and from her general behaviour it was to be concluded that she had had good news of some sort, which she would like, but could not make up her mind, to disclose.

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However, a week later she received another letter from the same source, and now she resolved to speak.

She solemnly announced that she had heard from old Princess Bielokonski, who had given her most comforting views about "that young rascal the prince." Her friend had hunted him up, and found that all was going well with him; he had since called in person upon Princess Bielokonski, and had produced a powerful impression.

The princess had received him each day since, and had introduced him into several good houses.

The girls could see that their mother concealed a great deal from them, and left out large spaces of the letter in reading it to them.

However, the ice was broken, and it was suddenly possible to mention the prince's name aloud; and again it became evident how very strong was the impression the young fellow had made in the household by his one visit there. Mrs. Epanchin was herself surprised, at the effect which the news from Moscow made upon the girls. And as soon as the ice was thus broken, the general lost no time in showing that he, too, took the greatest interest in the subject. He admitted that he was so interested, but that it was merely in the business side of the question. It appears that, in the interest of the prince, he had made arrangements in Moscow for a careful watch being kept upon the prince's business affairs, and especially upon Salaskin, the manager. All that had been said as to the prince being an undoubted heir to the property turned out to be perfectly true; but the property itself proved to be very much less valuable than was at first reported. The estate was considerably encumbered with debts; creditors turned up on all sides, and the prince, in spite of all advice and entreaty, insisted upon managing all matters of claim himself—which, of course, meant satisfying everybody all round, although half the claims were absolutely fraudulent.

Mrs. General confirmed all this; she said the princess had written to much the same effect, and had added that there was no curing a fool. But it was plain, from her expression of face, how strongly she approved of this particular young fool's doings. In conclusion, the general observed that his wife took as great an interest in the prince as though he were her own son; and that she had commenced to be especially affectionate and caressing towards Aglaya, was a self-evident fact.

All this caused the general to look grave and important.

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But, alas! this agreeable state of affairs very soon changed once more.

A couple of weeks went by, and suddenly the general and wife were once more gloomy and silent, and the ice was as firm as ever again.

The fact was, the general, who had heard from an informant, first, of how Nastasia Philipovna had fled to Moscow and had been discovered there by Rogojin; how that she had then disappeared once more, and been found again by Rogojin, and how after that she had almost promised to marry him—now received news that she had once more disappeared, almost on the very day fixed for her wedding, flying somewhere into the interior of Russia this time, and that Prince Muishkin had left all his affairs in the hands of Salaskin and disappeared also—but whether he was with Nastasia, or had only set off in search of her, was unknown.

Lisabetha Prokofievna received confirmatory news from the princess,—and alas, two months after the prince's first departure from St. Petersburg, darkness and mystery once more enveloped his whereabouts and actions, and in the Epanchin family the ice of silence once more formed over the subject.

Varia, however, informed the girls of what had happened, she having received the news from Ptitsin, who generally knew more than most people.

We may here mention that the Epanchin family had made up their minds to spend the summer abroad, all except the general, who would not waste time in travelling for enjoyment.

This arrangement was brought about by the persistence and obstinacy of the girls, who insisted that they were never allowed to go abroad because their parents were too anxious to marry them off. Perhaps their parents had at last come to the conclusion that husbands might be found abroad—I don't know.

However, it may be remarked that the marriage between Alexandra and Totski had been broken off. Since the prince's departure from St. Petersburg no more had been said about it; the subject had been dropped without ceremony, much to the joy of Mrs. General, who announced that she was ready to cross herself with both hands in gratitude for the escape. The general, however, regretted Totski for a long while. "Such a fortune!" he sighed, "and such a good easy-going fellow!"

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However, it soon became known that Totski had proposed to, and was accepted by a grand Marchioness, and was to be carried off by her to France.

"Oh, well," thought the general, "then he's sure to come to grief."

So the Epanchins prepared to depart for the summer.

But now another circumstance occurred, which changed all the plans once more, and again the intended journey was put off, much to the delight of the general and his spouse.

A certain Prince S— arrived in St. Petersburg from Moscow, an eminent and honourably-eminent young man. He was one of those active persons who always find some good work to employ themselves upon. Without forcing himself, modest and unobtrusive, this young prince was well in with much that happened in the world in general.

He had served, at first, in one of the civil departments, had then attended to matters connected with the local government of provincial towns, and had of late been a correspondent of our Russian learned societies. He was a man of excellent family and solid means, as the general expressed it.

Prince S— made the acquaintance of the general's family, and Adelaida, the second girl, made a great impression upon him. Towards spring, the prince proposed to her. She accepted him. The general and his wife were delighted. The journey abroad was put off, and the wedding was fixed for a day not very distant.

The trip abroad might have been enjoyed later on by Mrs. General and her two remaining daughters, but for another circumstance.

It so happened that Prince S— introduced a distant relation of his own into the Epanchin family—one Eugene Pavlovitch, a young officer of about twenty-eight years of age, whose success among the ladies in Moscow had been proverbial. This young gentleman no sooner set eyes on Aglaya than he became a frequent visitor at the house.

Nothing was said; there were not even any hints made; but still, it seemed better to the parents to say nothing more about going abroad this season, at all events. Aglaya herself perhaps was of a different opinion.

This last event happened just before the second appearance of our hero upon the stage of our novel.

By this time, to judge from appearances, poor Prince Muishkin had been quite forgotten in St. Petersburg; if he had appeared suddenly among his acquaintances, he would have

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been received as one from the skies; but we must just glance at one more fact before we conclude this preface.

Colia Ivolgin, for some time after the prince's departure, continued his old routine life. That is, he went to school, looked after his father, helped Varia with housekeeping as message-boy, and went frequently to see his friend, Hippolyte, a young fellow suffering from consumption, to whom he was much attached.

The lodgers disappeared very quickly—Ferdishenko immediately after the events at Nastasia Philipovna's, while the prince went to Moscow, as we know. Gania and his mother went to live with Varia and Ptitsin immediately after the latter's wedding, while the general was housed in a debtor's prison by reason of certain IOU's given to an exacting lady friend under the impression that they would never be formally used against him. "Trust people after that," said the poor general, narrating the facts to a select circle of friends within the prison walls over a bottle of wine.

Colia rarely went home now; he lived about with various friends—of whom he had a quantity—and, among others, the Epanchins, who had grown quite fond of him—the girls especially. But the old lady liked him, too, "for his candour, and because he does not flatter," she said. He was obliging and trustworthy. He had twice, or so, quarrelled with Mrs. Epanchin, however, declaring that she was a despot, and that he would never put his foot inside her door again. However, they had made it up again in a day or two. Aglaya, alone, did not seem to get on with the boy, and always treated him haughtily; however, he was destined to surprise her one fine day.

It was about Easter, when, taking advantage of a quiet moment, Colia handed Aglaya a letter, remarking that he "had orders to deliver it to her privately." Aglaya glared at the boy, but he did not wait to hear what she had to say, and went out. Aglaya broke the seal, and read as follows:—

"Once you did me the honour of giving me a confidential commission. Perhaps you have quite forgotten me now! How is it that I am writing to you? I do not know; but I am conscious of an irresistible desire to remind you of my existence, especially *you*, I mean. How many times I have needed all three of you; but only you have dwelt in my mind's eye. I need you—I need you badly. I will not write about myself, I will not tell you my story. I should not like to; but I long for

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you to be happy. *Are* you happy? That is all I wished to say to you.—Your brother, PR. L. MUISHKIN."

On reading this short and disconnected note, Aglaya suddenly blushed all over, and mused.

It would be difficult to describe her thoughts at that moment. One of them was, "Shall I show it to anyone?" She was ashamed to show it. So she ended by hiding it in her table drawer, doing so with a very strange ironical smile upon her lips.

Next day, she took it out, and put it into a large book, as she usually did with her papers; she laughed immensely when she glanced at the name of the book, and saw that it was "Don Quixote," but she did not know exactly why she laughed.

I cannot say, either, whether she showed the letter to her sisters or not.

But when she had read it herself once more, it suddenly struck her that surely that conceited boy, Colia, had not been the one chosen correspondent of the prince all this while. She determined to ask Colia; but the latter informed her haughtily that though he had given the prince his present address when the latter left town, and had offered his services, that the prince had never before given him any commission to perform, nor had he written a single letter until the following scrap had arrived, together with Aglaya's letter. Aglaya took the note, which read:

"Dear Colia,—Please be so kind as to give the enclosed sealed letter to Aglaya Ivanovna. Keep well.—Ever your loving, PR. L. MUISHKIN."

"It seems absurd to trust such a little pepper-box as that, however," thought Aglaya, as she returned the note, and walked past the "pepper-box" with an expression of great contempt.

This was more than Colia could bear. He determined to ask Gania to lend him his new tie, and see what effect that would have on her.

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II.

IT was the first few days of June, and the weather in St. Petersburg was most magnificent. The Epanchins had a beautiful country-house at Pavlovsk,* and to this spot Mrs. Epanchin determined to proceed without further delay. In a couple of days all was ready, and the family had moved over. A day or two after this removal to Pavlovsk, Prince Muishkin arrived in St. Petersburg by the morning train from Moscow. No one met him; but, as he stepped out of his carriage, he was suddenly aware of a strange fiery glare of somebody's eyes fixed upon him from among the crowd of passengers precipitated from the newly-arrived train. On endeavouring to re-discover the eyes, and inquire into the strange circumstance, he could find nothing to guide him. It must have been a hallucination; but the disagreeable impression remained.

Without the aid of this last coincidence, the prince was sad and dull enough, and seemed to be much pre-occupied.

His isvoschick† drove him to a certain small hotel, a wretched little place near the Liteynaya. Here the prince engaged a couple of rooms, dark and badly furnished; he washed and dressed, and hurriedly left the house again, as though anxious to waste no time, or hastening to catch someone at home, who, he feared, would leave the house before he could get there. Anyone who saw the prince for the first time since he left Petersburg would judge that he had improved vastly so far as his exterior was concerned. His clothes alone were very different; they were more fashionable, and newer, Moscow clothes made by a good tailor.

The first thing the prince did was to take a droschky and drive to Lebedeff's house. The latter was the owner of a nice little country house at Pavlovsk which the prince was anxious to secure for the season. Having engaged the house and arranged with Lebedeff, who was to occupy a detached wing, that they should move down to Pavlovsk together the day after to-morrow, the prince hastened away again.

It was now twelve o'clock.

The prince knew that if he called at the Epanchin's now at once he would only find the general, and that the latter would

* One of the fashionable summer resorts near St. Petersburg.
† Cab-driver.

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be very busy. He thought the general would probably carry him straight off to Pavlovsk if he went; whereas there was one visit he was most anxious to make without delay.

So at the risk of missing General Epanchin altogether and thus losing his visit to Pavlovsk for this day, at least, the prince decided to go and look for the house he desired to find.

The visit he was about to pay was, to him, in some respects, perilous. He was in two minds as to how to pay it, or, indeed, whether to pay it at all. He knew that the house was in the Gorohovaya, not far from the Sadovaya, and determined to go there first and then decide as to whether to enter or not.

Arrived at the point where the Gorohovaya crosses the Sadovaya, he was surprised to find how excessively agitated he was; he had no idea that his heart could beat so painfully as it now did.

One house in the Gorohovaya began to attract his attention long before he reached it, and the prince remembered afterwards that he had said to himself: "That is the house, I'm sure of it." He came up to it quite curious to discover whether he had guessed right, and felt that he would be disagreeably impressed to find that he had actually done so. The house was a large gloomy-looking structure, without the slightest claim to architectural beauty, in colour a dirty green. There are many of these old houses, built towards the end of the last century, still standing about that part of St. Petersburg, and showing little change from their original form and colour.

Arrived at the gate, the prince looked up at the legend over it, which was:

"House Rogojin, hereditary honorary citizen."

The prince hesitated no longer; he opened the glazed door at the bottom of the outer stairs and made his way up to the second storey. The place was dark and gloomy-looking, the walls of the stone staircase were painted a dull red. Rogojin and his mother and brother among them occupied the whole of the second storey. The footman who opened the door to our hero led him away without ado through several large rooms until they arrived at a certain door, where he knocked.

Parfen Rogojin opened the door himself.

On seeing the prince he became so deadly white and so apparently fixed to the spot he stood in, that he was more like a marble statue than a human being. The prince had expected some surprise on Rogojin's part, but the latter evidently considered his visit as something impossible and miraculous.

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"Parfen! perhaps my visit is ill-timed; I—I can go away again if you like."

"No, no; it's all right, come in," said Parfen, recollecting himself.

They were on very familiar terms now. At Moscow they had had many occasions of meeting; indeed, some few events during those meetings there were but too vividly impressed upon their memories. They had not met now, however, for three months.

The deathlike pallor, and a sort of slight convulsion about the lips still rested on Rogojin's face. Though he had welcomed his guest, he was still evidently much disturbed. While following Rogojin to a seat, the prince suddenly stopped and took a good long look into his eyes. So long did this fixed gaze last that at length Rogojin laughed out loud, though by no means comfortably.

"What are you staring at me like that for?" he muttered. "Sit down."

The prince took a chair.

"Parfen," he said, "tell me honestly, did you know that I was coming to Petersburg or no?"

"Oh, I supposed you were coming," he replied, smiling sarcastically, "and I was right in my supposition, you see; but how was I to know that you would come *to-day?*"

A certain strangeness in Rogojin's manner and impatience of the irritable answer, impressed the prince still more forcibly.

"And if you did know that I was coming this day, why must you be so irritated about it?" asked the prince in quiet surprise.

"Why do you ask me these questions?"

"Because when I jumped out of the carriage this morning, I noticed just such another pair of eyes as those with which you glared at me when you looked round a moment since."

"Ha! and whose eyes may they have been?" said Rogojin, suspiciously. It seemed to the prince that he was trembling.

"I don't know; I thought it was a hallucination, I so often have hallucinations now-a-days. I feel quite as I did five years ago when my fits were about to come on."

"Well, perhaps it was a hallucination, *I* don't know," muttered Parfen.

The affectionate friendly smile on his lips at this moment was not at all appropriate to the circumstances; it seemed to the prince as though in this smile of Rogojin's something had snapped and that he could not mend it, try as he would.

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"Shall you go abroad again then?" he asked, and suddenly added, "do you remember how we came up in the train from Pskoff together? you and your cloak and leggings, eh?"

And Rogojin burst out laughing, this time with unconcealed malice, just as though he were glad that he had been able to find an opportunity for giving vent to his spleen.

"Have you quite taken up your quarters here?" asked the prince at last.

"Yes, I'm at home. Where else should I go to?"

"We haven't met for some time. Meanwhile I have heard things about you which I should not have believed to be possible."

"What of that—people will say anything," said Rogojin drily.

"At all events, you've disbanded your troop—and you are living in your own house instead of being fast and loose about the place; that's all very good. Is this house yours exclusively, or joint property?"

"Mother's! you get to her apartments by that passage."

"Where's your brother?"

"Over in the wing."

"Is he a family man?"

"Widower. Why do you want to know all this?"

The prince stared back at him, but said nothing. He had suddenly relapsed into musing, and had probably not heard the last question at all. Rogojin did not insist upon an answer, but said no more. There was silence for a few moments.

"I guessed which was your house from a hundred yards off," said the prince at last.

"Why so?"

"I don't quite know. Your house has the aspect of yourself and all your family; it bears the stamp of the Rogojin life; but ask me why I think so, and I can tell you nothing. It is nonsense of course. I am nervous about this kind of thing troubling me so much. I had never before imagined what sort of a house you would live in, and yet no sooner did I set eyes on this one than I said to myself that this must be yours."

"H'm!" said Rogojin, not taking in what the prince meant by his remark.

The room they were now sitting in was a large, high—but dark room, well furnished, principally with writing tables and desks, covered with papers and a few books. On the wall opposite the prince was a full length portrait of an elderly man with a yellowish, unhealthy, and unpleasant looking face.

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"Is that your father?" asked the prince.

"Yes," said Rogojin, "why do you ask that?"

"Are you going to be married here?"

"Me—yes!" replied Rogojin, who seemed to shudder under the unexpected shock of the question.

"Soon?"

"You know yourself it does not depend upon me."

"Parfen, I am not your enemy, and I do not intend to oppose your intentions in any way. I repeat this to you now just as I said it to you once before on a very similar occasion. When you were arranging for your projected marriage in Moscow, I did not interfere with you—you know I did not. That first time she fled to me from you, from the very altar almost, and begged me to 'save her from you.' Afterwards she ran away from me again, and you found her and arranged your marriage with her once more; and now, I hear, she has ran away from you and come to Petersburg. Is it true? Lebedeff wrote me to this effect, and that's why I came here. That you had once more arranged matters with Nastasia Philipovna I only learned last night in the train from a friend of yours, Zalesheff—if you wish to know.

"I confess I came here with an object; I wished to persuade Nastasia to go abroad for her health; she requires it much, both head and body need a change badly. I did not intend to take her abroad myself, I was going to arrange it all, however. Now I tell you honestly, Parfen, if it is true that you have rearranged a marriage, I will not so much as set eyes upon her, and I will never even come to see you again.

"You know quite well that I am telling the truth, because I have always been frank with you. I have never concealed my own opinion on these questions from you. I have always told you that I consider a marriage between you and her would be ruin to her. You would also be ruined, and perhaps more hopelessly than herself. If this marriage were to be broken off again, I admit I should be greatly pleased; but at the same time I have not the slightest intention to hinder it in any way. You may be quite easy in your mind, and you need not suspect me. You know yourself whether I was ever really your rival or not, even when she ran away and came to me.

"There, you are laughing at me,—I know why you laugh,—I told you before that I did not love this woman with love, but with pity! You said then that you understood me; did you really understand me or not? What hatred there is in your eyes at this moment. I came to relieve your mind, because

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you are dear to me also. I love you very much, Parfen; and now I shall go away and never come back again. Good-bye."

The prince rose.

"Stay here a bit," said Parfen, not leaving his chair and resting his head on his right hand. "I haven't seen you for a long time."

The prince sat down again. Both were silent for a few moments.

"When you are not by I always hate you, Lef Nicolaevitch. I have loathed you every day of these three months since I last saw you; by heaven I have," said Rogojin, "I could have taken and poisoned you at any minute. Now, you have been with me but a quarter of an hour, and all my malice seems to have melted away, and you are as dear to me as ever. Sit here a bit longer."

"When I am with you you trust me; but as soon as my back is turned you suspect me," said the prince, smiling friendly and trying to hide his emotion.

"I trust your voice, when I hear you speak. I quite understand that you and I cannot be compared."

"Why did you add that?—there; you see you have irritated yourself for nothing," said the prince.

"We are not asked, you see, for our opinion; we are made different, and with different tastes and feelings without being consulted. You say you love her with pity. I have no such pity for her. She hates me—that's the plain secret of the matter. I dream of her every night, and always that she is laughing at me with some other men. And so she does laugh at me. She thinks no more of marrying me than if she were changing her shoe. Would you believe it, I haven't seen her for five days, and I daren't go near her; she asks me why I have come, as if she were not content with having disgraced me—"

"Disgraced you! how?"

"Just as though you knew nothing about it! Why, she ran away from the very altar, and went to you. You admitted it yourself, just now. You don't know what a fool she made of me in Moscow; and the money I spent over her, the money! the money!"

"As if you can go and marry her now, Parfen! What will come of it all?" said the prince, with dread in his voice and face.

Rogojin gazed back gloomily, and with a terrible expression in his eyes, but said nothing.

"I haven't been to see her for five days" he said, after a

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slight pause. "I'm afraid of being turned out by her. She says she's still her own mistress, and may turn me off altogether, and go abroad. She told me this herself. I think she often does it merely to frighten me. She is always laughing at me, for some reason or other; but at other times she's angry, and that's what I'm afraid of. One day she asked me what I should do if I found she had deceived me. I said, 'You know well enough.'"

"What did she know?" cried the prince, trembling.

"How was I to tell?" replied Rogojin, with a hideous smile. "I did my best to catch her tripping in Moscow, but did not succeed. However, I caught hold of her one day, and said: 'You are engaged to be married into a respectable family, and yet you know what sort of a woman you are. *That's* the sort of woman you are,' I said."

"You told her that?"

"Yes."

"Well, go on."

"She says, 'I won't have you for a flunkey now, much less for a husband.' 'Then I sha'n't leave the house,' I say. 'Then I shall call somebody in and have you kicked out,' she says. So, then, I rushed at her, and made a few blue marks on her skin."

"Impossible!" cried the prince, aghast.

"I tell you it's true," said Rogojin quietly, but with his eyes ablaze with passion.

"Then for a day and a half I neither slept, nor ate, nor drank, and would not leave her lodging. I knelt at her feet: 'I shall die here,' I said, 'if you don't forgive me; and if you have me turned out, I shall drown myself; because, what should I be without you now?' She was like a madwoman all that day; now she would cry and groan; now she would threaten me with a knife, then she would scold me. She called in Zalesheff and Keller, and showed me off to them, shamed me in their presence. 'Let's all go to the theatre,' she says, 'and leave him here if he won't go—it's not my business. They'll give you some tea, Parfen Semeonitch, while I am away,' she says, 'for you must be hungry.' She came back from the theatre alone. 'Those cowards wouldn't come,' she says, 'they are afraid of you, and tried to frighten me, too, for he won't go away as he came, they said, he'll cut your throat—see if he doesn't. Now, I shall go to my bedroom, and I shall not even lock my door, just to show you *how* much I am afraid of you. You must be shown that once for all. Did you have tea?'

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'No,' I said, 'and I don't intend to have any.' 'Ha, ha! if only you were a respectable fellow, now; but that sort of heroism doesn't sit well on you,' she says.

"With that she did as she had said she would; she went into her bedroom, and did not even close her door. In the morning she came out. 'Are you quite mad?' she says, sharply. 'Why, you'll die of hunger like this.' 'Forgive me,' I says. 'No,' she says, 'I won't, and I won't marry you. I've said it. Surely you haven't sat in this chair all night without sleeping?' 'I didn't sleep,' I say. 'H'm! how sensible of you,' she says, 'and are you going to have no breakfast or dinner to-day?' 'I told you I wouldn't. Forgive me!' 'You've no idea how unbecoming this sort of thing is to you,' she says, 'it's like putting a saddle on a cow's back. Do you think you are frightening me? My word, what a dreadful thing that you should sit here and eat no food! How terribly frightened I am!' She wasn't angry long, and didn't seem to remember my offence at all.

"Then she came up to me and said, 'Do you know who the Pope of Rome is?' 'I've heard of him,' I said. 'I suppose you've read the "Universal History," Parfen Semeonitch, haven't you?' she asks. 'I've learned nothing at all,' I says. 'Then I'll lend it to you to read,' she says. 'You must know there was a Roman Pope once, and he was very angry with a certain Emperor; so the Emperor came and neither ate nor drank, but stood on his knees before the Pope's palace till he should be forgiven. And what sort of vows do you think that Emperor was making during all those three days on his knees? Stop, I'll read it to you.' Then she read me a lot of verses, where it said that the Emperor spent all that time vowing vengeance against the Pope. 'You don't mean to say you don't approve of the poem, Parfen Semeonitch,' she says. 'All you have read out is perfectly true,' says I. 'Aha!' says she, 'then you admit it's true, do you? and you are making m ntal promises to yourself that if I marry you, you will remind me of this indignity, and take it out of me.' 'I don't know,' I says, 'perhaps I was thinking like that, and perhaps I was not. I'm not thinking of anything just now.' 'What are your thoughts, then?' 'I'm thinking that when you rise from your chair and go past me, I watch you, and follow you with my eyes; if your dress do but rustle, my heart sinks; if you leave the room, I remember every little word and detail and action of yours, and what your voice sounded like, and what you said. I thought of nothing all last night, but sat here listening to your sleeping breath, and heard

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you move a little twice.' 'And as for your attack upon *me*,' she says, 'I suppose you never once thought of *that?*' 'Perhaps I did think of it, and perhaps not,' I say. 'And what if I don't either forgive you or marry you?' 'I tell you I shall go away and drown myself.' 'H'm!' she said, and then relapsed into silence. Then she got angry, and went out. 'I suppose you'd murder me before you drowned yourself, though!' she cried as she left the room.

"An hour after, she came to me again, looking melancholy. 'I will marry you, Parfen Semeonitch,' she says, 'not because I'm frightened of you, but because it's all the same to me how I ruin myself. Where can I do it better than here? Sit down,' she says, 'they'll bring you some dinner directly. And if I do marry you,' she says, 'I'll be a faithful wife to you—you need not doubt that.' Then she thought a bit, and said, 'At all events, you are not a flunkey; at first, I thought you were no better than a flunkey,' and she arranged the wedding and fixed the day straight away on the spot.

"Then, in another week, she had run away again, and came over here to Lebedeff's; and when I found her here, she says to me, 'I'm not going to renounce you altogether, but I wish to put off the wedding a bit longer yet—just as long as I like, though—for I am still my own mistress; so you may just wait, if you like.' That's how the matter stands between us now. What do you think of all this, Lef Nicolaevitch?"

"What do you think of it yourself?" replied the prince, looking sadly back at Rogojin.

"As if I can think anything about it; I—" he was about to say more, but stopped in anguish.

The prince rose and made as if he would leave the room again.

"At all events, I shall not interfere with you!" he murmured, as though making answer to some internal secret thought of his own.

"I'll tell you what!" cried Rogojin, and his eyes flashed fire, "I can't understand your yielding her to me like this; I don't understand it. Have you given up loving her altogether? At first you suffered badly—I know it—I saw it. Besides, why did you come post-haste after us? Out of pity, eh? He, he, he!" His mouth curved in a nasty smile.

"Do you think I am deceiving you?" asked the prince.

"No! I trust you—but I can't understand the thing. What seems more clear to me though than anything else is, that your pity is greater than my love." A hungry longing to go on and speak his whole mind out, seemed to flash in the man's eyes.

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"You don't separate your love from your malicious feelings, and therefore when your love passes away there will be the greater misery," said the prince. "I tell you this, Parfen—"

"What! that I'll cut her throat, you mean?"

The prince shuddered.

"You'll hate her afterwards for all your present love, and for all the torment you are suffering on her account now. What seems to me the most extraordinary, miraculous thing is, that she can consent to marry you again now, after all that has passed between you. When I heard the news yesterday, I could hardly bring myself to believe it. Why, she has cut and run twice from you, from the very altar rails, as it were, therefore she must have some presentiment of evil. What can she want with you now? Your money? Nonsense! besides, I should think you must have made a fairly large hole in your fortune by now. Surely it is not because she is so very anxious to find a husband? She could find many a one besides yourself. Anyone would be better than you, because you will murder her at once, and I feel sure she must know that but too well by now. Surely your love for her is not like what I have read of. There are people who love only to—" The prince paused and reflected.

"What are you grinning at my father's portrait again for?" asked Rogojin, suddenly. He was carefully and quietly observing every little change and expression of the prince's face.

"I smiled because the idea came into my head that if it were not for this frantic passion of yours you might have, and would have, settled into just such a man as your father, and that very quickly too. You'd have sat down once for all in this house of yours with some old wife—some silent and obedient old creature. You would have spoken rarely, trusted no one, heeded no one, and thought of nothing but making money."

"Laugh away! she said exactly the same, almost word for word, when she saw father's portrait. It's beautiful to see how entirely you and she are at one now-a-days."

"What, has she been here?" asked the prince with curiosity.

"Yes! She looked long at the portrait and asked all about my father. 'You'd be just such another,' she said at last, and laughed. 'You have such terrible passions, Parfen,' she said, 'that they'd have you over in Siberia in no time if you had not, luckily, a little good sense along with them, for you have a good deal of sense about you.' (She said this—believe it or not—the first time I ever heard anything of that sort from her). 'You'd soon throw up all this rioting and rowdyism that you indulge in now, and you'd settle down to quiet steady

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money making, because you have no education; and here you'd stay like just your father before you. And you'd love your money so that you'd amass not two millions, like him, but ten millions; and you'd die of hunger on your money bags to finish up with, because of your passions, for you carry everything to passion,' says she. There, that's exactly word for word as she said it to me. She always talks nonsense and laughs when she's with me. We went all over this old house together. 'I shall change all this,' I said, 'or else I'll buy a new house for the wedding.' 'No, no!' she says, 'don't touch anything; leave it all as it is; I shall live with your mother if I marry you.'

"I took her to see my mother, and she was as respectful and kind as though she were her own daughter. Mother has been sitting in her chair quite demented ever since father died—she's an old woman. She sits and bows from her place to any one she sees. If you left her alone and didn't feed her for three days I don't believe she would notice it. Well, I took her hand, and I said, 'Give your blessing to this lady, mother, she is going to be my wife.' So Nastasia kissed mother's hand with great feeling. 'She must have suffered terribly, hasn't she?' she says. She saw this book here lying before me. 'What! have you begun to read Russian history?' she says. She told me once in Moscow, you know, that I had better get Solovief's Russian History and read it, because I knew nothing. 'That's good,' she says, 'you go on like that, reading books. I'll make you a list myself of the books you ought to read first—shall I?' She had never once spoken to me like this before, it was the first time I could breathe before her like a living creature."

"I'm very, very glad to hear of this, Parfen," said the prince, with real feeling; "who knows? maybe God will yet adapt you to one another."

"No, never, never!" cried Rogojin, excitedly.

"Look here, Parfen; if you love her so much, surely you must be anxious to deserve her esteem? and if you do so wish, surely you may hope too? I said just now that I considered it a miracle that she could still be ready to marry you;—well, though I cannot yet understand it, I feel sure she must have some good reason, or she wouldn't do it. She is sure of your love; but besides that, she must attribute *something* else to you,—some sort of worth or dignity as a man,—otherwise the thing would not be. What you have just said confirms my words. You say yourself that she found it possible to speak to you quite differently from her usual manner.

"You are revengeful, you know, and jealous, therefore when

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anything annoying happens to you, you exaggerate its significance. Of course, of *course,* she does not think so ill of you as you say. Why, if she did, she would simply be walking to a drowning death, or to the knife, with her eyes wide open, when she married you. This cannot be the case. As if anybody would bare their throat to the knife like this."

Rogojin listened to the prince's excited words with a bitter smile. His conviction was, apparently, unalterable.

"How dreadfully you look at me, Parfen!" said the prince, with a heavy feeling at his heart.

"Water or the knife!" said the latter, at last. "Ha, ha!—why, that's exactly why she is going to marry me, because she knows for certain that the knife awaits her love—my goodness, prince, have you only just perceived that fact?"

"I don't understand you."

"Perhaps the fellow really doesn't understand me! they do say that you are a—you know what! She loves another—then, you can understand that much! Just as I love her now, exactly so she loves another man. And that other man is—do you know who? It's *you.* There—you didn't know that, eh?"

"I?"

"You, you; she has loved you ever since that day, her birthday! Only she thinks she cannot marry you, because it would be the ruin of you, and an end to your career. 'Everybody knows what sort of a woman *I* am,' she says. She told me all this herself, to my very face! She's afraid of disgracing and ruining *you,* she says, but it doesn't matter about *me,* she can marry me all right! that's the sort of thing she considers *me;* we mustn't lose sight of that fact!"

"Well, but why did she run away to me, and then again *from* me to—"

"From you to me? Ha, ha! that's nothing! Why, what funny ideas come into people's heads sometimes! She always acts as though she were in a delirium now-a-days! Either she says, 'Come on, I'll marry you! quick, let's have the wedding quickly!' and fixes the day, and seems in a hurry for it, and when it begins to come near she feels frightened, or else some other idea gets into her head—goodness knows! you've seen herself—you know how she goes on—laughing and crying and raving! There's nothing extraordinary about her having run away from you! She ran away because she perceived how dearly she loved you. She could not bear to be near you. You said just now that I had found her at Moscow, when she ran away from you; bosh! I didn't do anything of the sort; she came to me

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herself, straight from you. 'Name the day—I'm ready!' she said. 'Let's have some champagne, and go and hear the gipsies sing!' she says. I tell you she'd have thrown herself into the water long ago if it were not for me! She doesn't throw herself in because I am, perhaps, even more dreadful to her than the water! She's marrying me out of spite; if she marries me, I tell you, it will be for malice—spite!"

"But how do you, how do you—," began the prince, gazing with dread and horror into Rogojin's face; he did not finish his sentence.

"Why don't you finish your sentence? Shall I tell you what you were thinking to yourself just then? You were thinking 'how can she possibly marry him after this? How can it possibly be permitted?' Oh, *I* know what you were thinking about."

"I didn't come here for—that purpose, Parfen; that was not in my mind—"

"That may be! perhaps you didn't *come* with the idea, but the idea is certainly there *now*! Ha, ha! well, that's enough! What are you excited about? as if you didn't know it all before! you astonish me!"

"All this is mere jealousy—it is malady on your part, Parfen! you exaggerate everything," said the prince, excessively agitated. "What are you doing?"

"Let go of it!" said Parfen, seizing the knife from the prince's hand, a knife which the latter had that moment taken up from the table, where it lay beside the history. Parfen replaced it where it had been.

"I seemed to know it—I felt it, when I came back to this place," continued the prince. "I did not want to come, I wished to forget all this, to uproot it from my memory altogether! Well, goodbye—what are you doing?"

The prince had absently laid hold of the knife lying upon the book for a second time, and again Rogojin snatched it from his hand, and threw it down on the table. It was a plain-looking knife, with a bone handle, with a blade about eight inches long, and broad in proportion; it did not clasp.

Seeing that the prince was considerably struck with the fact that he had twice seized this knife out of his hand, Rogojin caught it up with some irritation, put it inside his book, and threw the latter across to another table.

"Do you cut your pages with it, or what?" asked the prince, still rather absently, as though under the influence of the deep thought into which the late conversation had thrown him.

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"Yes."

"It's a garden knife, isn't it?"

"Yes; can't one cut pages with a garden knife?"

"It's quite new."

"Well, what of that? can't I buy a new knife if I like?" shouted Rogojin furiously, his irritation growing with every word.

The prince shuddered, and gazed fixedly at Parfen. Suddenly he burst out laughing.

"Why, what a fellow I am," he said, gaily; "I didn't mean to ask you these questions a bit, I was thinking of something quite different! I am always so absent and funny now-a-days! Well, goodbye—I can't remember what I wanted to say—goodbye!"

"Not that way," said Rogojin.

"There, I've forgotten that too!"

"This way—come along—I'll show you out."

III.

THEY passed through the same rooms which the prince had traversed on his arrival. In the large hall there were pictures on the walls, portraits and landscapes of little interest over the door; however, there was one of strange and rather striking shape; it was six or seven feet in length, and not more than about a foot in height. It represented the Saviour just taken from the Cross.

The prince glanced at it, but took no notice of the picture. He moved hastily on, as though anxious to leave the house. But Rogojin suddenly stopped underneath the picture alluded to.

"My father picked up all those pictures very cheap at auctions, and so on," he said; "they are all rubbish, except the one over the door."

"Yes—that's a copy of Holbein's picture!" said the prince, glancing at it, "and a good copy, too, so far as I am able to judge; I saw this picture abroad, and could not forget it—what's the matter?"

Rogojin had dropped the subject of the picture and gone on. Of course his absence of mind and irritation were quite suffi-

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cient to account for his conduct; but, still, it seemed specially strange to the prince that he should have so very abruptly dropped a conversation commenced by himself. Rogojin did not take any notice of his last question.

"Lef Nicolaevitch," said Rogojin, after a pause, during which the two walked along a little further, "I have long wished to ask you, do you believe in God, or not?"

"How strangely you speak, and how odd you look!" said the other, involuntarily.

"I like looking at that picture," muttered Rogojin, not noticing, apparently, that the prince had not answered his question.

"That picture! that picture!" cried the prince, under the impression of a sudden idea. "Why, some people's faith is ruined by that picture!"

"Faith is ruined without that!" said Rogojin, unexpectedly. They had now reached the front door.

The prince stopped.

"How?" he said. "What do you mean? I was half joking, and you took me up quite seriously! and why do you ask me whether I believe in God?"

"Oh, no particular reason. I meant to ask you before—many people are unbelievers now-a-days, especially Russians, I am told."

Rogojin laughed bitterly as he said these words, and opening the door, held it open for the prince to pass out. The prince looked surprised, but went out. Parfen followed him as far as the landing of the outer stairs, and shut the door behind him. They both now stood facing one another, as though oblivious of where they were, or what they had to do next.

"Well, goodbye!" said the prince, holding out his hand.

"Goodbye," said Rogojin, pressing it hard, but quite mechanically.

The prince made one step forward, and turned round once more:

"As to faith," he said, evidently unwilling to leave Rogojin in this state—"as to faith—I had four curious meetings in two days, a week or so ago. One morning I met a man, one C—, in the train, and made acquaintance with him at once. I had often heard of him as a very learned man, but an Atheist; and I was very glad of the opportunity of conversing with so eminent and clever a person. He was an Atheist, and talked a good deal about it, but all the while it appeared to me that he was speaking *outside the subject*. And it has always so struck

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me, both in speaking to such men and in reading their Atheistical works, that they are all beside the subject; they do not touch upon the real essence of the matter, although they may seem to be doing so, perhaps, all the while. I told him so, but I daresay I did not clearly express what I meant, for he could not understand me.

"That same evening I stopped at a small provincial hotel, and it so happened that a dreadful murder had been committed there the night before, and everybody was talking about it. Two peasants—elderly men and old friends—had had tea together there the night before, and were to occupy the same bedroom. One of them had noticed for the first time that his friend possessed a silver watch on a yellow ribbon; the first was by no means a thief, and was, as peasants go, a rich man; but this watch so roused his cupidity and so seduced his moral sense, that he could not restrain himself. He took a knife, and when his friend turned his back he came up softly behind, raised his eyes to heaven, crossed himself, and saying earnestly to himself—'God forgive me for Christ's sake!' he cut his friend's throat as though he had been a sheep, and took the coveted watch."

Rogojin roared with laughter. He laughed as though he were in a sort of fit. It was strange enough to see him laughing so after the dreadful state of restrained passion he had been in just before.

"Oh, I like that! I like that better than anything!" he cried convulsively, and panting for breath. "Some fellows are absolutely *un*believers; but here is such a thorough-going believer that he even murders his friends to the tune of a prayer! Oh, prince, prince, that's too good for anything! You can't have invented that; that's the best thing I've heard!"

"Next morning I went out for a stroll through the town," continued the prince, so soon as Rogojin was a little quieter, though his laughter still hung about him and burst out at intervals, "and soon observed a drunken-looking soldier stepping along the pavement; he was all tattered and torn. He comes up to me and says, 'Buy my silver cross, sir, will you? you shall have it for fourpence—it's real silver.' I looked, and there he held a cross, just taken off his own neck,* evidently,—but a pewter thing, large, and made after some antique model. I fished out fourpence, and put his cross on my own neck, and I could see by his face that he was as satisfied as he

* Every orthodox Russian wears such a cross, suspended from his neck by a ribbon or string.

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could be, and thought he had succeeded in humbugging an ass of a gentleman, and away he went to drink the value of his cross. I was greatly struck by this, and I thought, 'No! I won't judge this poor drunken wretch in a hurry; God knows what warped and perverted ideas he may not have in his brain!'

"Well, I went homewards, and near the hotel I came across a poor woman, carrying a child—a little baby of some six weeks old. The mother was quite a girl herself. The baby was smiling up at her, for the first time in its life, just at that moment; and while I watched the woman she suddenly crossed herself, oh, *so* devoutly! 'What is it, my good woman?' I asked her. 'Why,' she says, 'I was thinking that exactly as is a mother's joy when her baby smiles for the first time into her eyes, so is God's joy when one of His sinning children turns and prays to Him for the first time, with all his heart!' This is what the poor woman said to me, almost word for word; and such a deep, refined, truly religious thought it was—a thought in which the whole essence of Christianity was expressed in one flash—that is, the faithful recognition of God as our actual Father, and of God's joy in men as His own children, which is the chief idea of Christianity. I never heard such a beautiful thought before! and she was a simple country woman—a mother, it's true—and perhaps, who knows, she may have been the wife of the drunken soldier.

"Listen, Parfen, you put a question to me just now—listen to my reply: The essence of religious feeling is subservient to no dogma, to no Atheism, to no crime, or acts of any kind—it has nothing to do with these things—and never had. There is something besides all this, something over which Atheism will trip for ever, and for ever the Atheist will hold forth outside the real point. But the principal thing is, and this is the conclusion of my argument, that all this is most observable in the heart of a Russian. This is a conviction which I have gained while I have been in this Russia of ours. Yes, Parfen! there is work to be done; there *is* work to be done in this Russian world of ours! Remember how friendly we learned to become in Moscow; and I never wished to come here after you at all; and I never thought to meet you like this, Parfen! Well, well—goodbye—goodbye—God help you!"

He turned and went downstairs.

"Lef Nicolaevitch!" cried Parfen, before he had reached the next landing. "Have you got that cross, which you bought from the soldier, with you?"

"Yes, I have," the prince stopped again.

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"Show it me here, will you?"

A new sally! the prince reflected, and then mounted the stairs once more. He unhooked his cross without taking the ribbon off his neck.

"Give it to me," said Parfen.

"Why? do you—"

The prince would rather have kept this particular cross.

"I'll wear it; and you shall have mine; I'll take it off at once."

"You wish to exchange crosses? Very well, Parfen, if that's the case, I'm glad enough—that makes us brethren, you know."

The prince took off his pewter cross, Parfen doffed his gold one, and the exchange was made.

Parfen was silent.

With heavy-hearted surprise the prince observed that the old look of distrust, the old bitter, ironical smile had still not altogether left his newly adopted brother's face; at moments, at all events, it showed itself but too plainly.

At last Rogojin took the prince's hand very quietly, and stood so for some moments, as though he could not make up his mind to something in his thoughts; at length he drew him after himself, murmuring almost inaudibly, "Come!"

They past the first flight of steps, and stopped at the landing, ringing the bell at a door opposite to Parfen's own lodging.

An old woman opened to them and bowed low to Parfen, who asked her some questions hurriedly, but did not wait to hear her answer, and led the prince on through several dark and cold-looking rooms.

Without the ceremony of knocking or announcing themselves the two entered a small apartment, at length, furnished like a drawing-room, but with a partition of some red wood dividing one half of it from what was probably a bedroom. In one corner of this room there sat an old woman in an arm-chair, close against the stove. She did not look very old, and her face was a pleasant, round one; but she was perfectly grey, and, as one could detect at the first glance, quite in her second childhood. She was dressed in a black stuff dress, with a black handkerchief round her neck and shoulders, and a white cap with black ribbons. Her feet were raised on a footstool. Alongside of her sat another old woman, also dressed in mourning, and silently knitting a stocking; this was evidently a companion. They both looked as though they never broke the

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silence. The first old woman, so soon as she saw Rogojin and the prince, smiled and bowed courteously several times, in token of her gratification.

"Mother," said Rogojin, kissing her hand, "here is my great friend, Prince Muishkin; we have exchanged crosses; he was like a real brother to me at Moscow at one time, and did a great deal for me. Bless him, mother, as you would bless your own soul. Wait a moment, let me arrange your hands for you, so."

But the old lady, before Parfen had time to touch her, raised her right hand, and with three fingers held up devoutly crossed the prince. She then nodded her head kindly to him once more.

"There, come along, Lef Nicolaevitch; that's all I brought you here for," said Rogojin.

When they reached the stairs again he added:

"There, she understood nothing of what I said to her, and did not know what I wanted her to do, and yet she blessed you; that shows she wished to do so of herself. Well, good-bye, it's time you went, and I must go too."

He opened his own lodging door.

"Well, let me at least embrace you and say good-bye, you trange fellow!" cried the prince, looking with gentle reproach at Rogojin as he advanced to carry his wish into effect. But Parfen hardly raised his arms when he dropped them again. He could not make up his mind to it; he turned away from the prince in order to avoid looking at him. He would not embrace him.

"Don't be afraid," he muttered, indistinctly, "though I have taken your cross, I shall not cut your throat for the sake of your watch." So saying, he laughed suddenly, and strangely. Then in a moment his face became transfigured; he grew deadly white, his lips trembled, his eyes burned like coals. He raised his arms and held the prince tightly to him, and with a sigh he added:

"Well, take her if it's Fate. She's yours, I surrender her. Remember Rogojin," and casting the prince from him, without looking back at him, he hurriedly entered his own lodging, banging the door after him.

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IV.

IT was late, nearly half-past two, and the prince did not find General Epanchin at home. He left a card, and determined to look up Colia, who had a room at the small hotel near. Colia was not in, but he was informed that Nicolai Ardalionovitch would be back shortly, and had left word that if he were not in by half-past four it was to be understood that he had gone to Pavlofsk to General Epanchin's, and would dine there. The prince decided to wait here till half-past three and ordered some dinner. At half-past three there was no sign of Colia. The prince waited until four o'clock, and then strolled off wherever his feet should carry him.

In early summer there are often magnificent days in St. Petersburg—bright, hot, quiet, still days. This happened to be one of these.

For some time the prince wandered about without aim or object; he did not know the town well. He stopped to look about him on bridges, at street corners. He entered a confectioner's shop to rest himself. He was in a state of nervous excitement and perturbation; he noticed nothing and no one; and he felt a craving for solitude, to be alone with his thoughts, and sufferings, and to give himself up to them passively. He did not feel inclined to answer the questions that would rise up in his heart and mind: "I am not to blame for all this," he thought to himself, unconsciously.

Towards six o'clock he found himself at the station of the Tsarsko-Selski railway.

He was tired of solitude now; a new rush of feeling took hold of his heart, and a flood of bright light chased away the gloom, for a moment, from his soul. He took a ticket to Pavlofsk, and determined to go down there as fast as he could, but something stopped him; a reality, and not a fantasy, as he was inclined to think it. He was about to take his place in a carriage, when he suddenly threw away his ticket and came out again, disturbed and thoughtful. A few moments later, in the street, he thought out something that had bothered him all the afternoon; he caught himself engaged in a very strange occupation which he now recollected he had taken up at odd moments for the last few hours—it was looking about all around him for something, he did not know what. He would forget it for a while, half an hour or so, and then suddenly the search would recommence.

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But he had hardly discovered this curious phenomenon, which had been in force with him so long without his knowledge, when another recollection suddenly swam through his brain, interesting him for the moment, exceedingly. He remembered that the last time he had been engaged looking around him for the unknown something, he had been standing before a cutler's shop in the window of which were exposed certain goods for sale. He was extremely anxious now to discover whether this shop and these goods really had existed or whether the whole thing had been a hallucination.

He felt in a very curious condition to-day, a condition similar to that which had preceded his fits in bygone years.

He remembered that at such times he had been particularly absent, and could not discriminate between objects and persons even if he concentrated special attention upon them.

He remembered there was something in the window marked at sixty copeaks. Therefore, if the shop existed and if this sixty-copeak object were really in the window, it would prove that he had been able to concentrate his attention on this article at a moment when, as a general rule, his absence of mind would have been too great to admit of any such concentration of attention; in fact, at the moment or very shortly after he had left the railway station in a state of excitement and agitation.

So he walked back looking about him for the shop, and his heart beat with intolerable impatience. Ah! here was the very shop, and there was the article marked "60 cop." Of course, it's sixty copeaks, he thought, and certainly worth no more. This idea amused him and he laughed.

But it was a hysterical laugh; he was feeling very ill. He remembered clearly that just here, standing before this very window, he had suddenly turned and just as earlier in the day he had found the dreadful eyes of Rogojin fixed upon him, there they were again. Convinced therefore that in this respect at all events he had been under no delusion, he left the shop and went on.

This must be thought out; it was clear that there had been no hallucination at the station then either; something had actually happened to him, on both occasions, there was no doubt of it. But again a loathing for all mental exertions overmastered him; he would not think it out now, he would put it off and think of something else. He remembered that during his epileptic fits, or rather immediately preceding them, he had always experienced a moment or two when his whole heart, and mind, and body seemed to wake up to vigour and light; when

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he became filled with joy and hope, and all his anxieties seemed to be swept away for ever; these moments were but presentiments, as it were, of the one final second (it was never more than a second) in which his fit took place. He had sometimes felt, and had tried to say to himself, during that moment of bliss, that he would willingly give a whole lifetime for such a moment. He felt, too, at such times, that he could realise the meaning of the words, "And there shall be no more Time." All this he thought out, sitting on one of the benches in the "summer garden." It was seven o'clock now; the garden was empty and the air was very close.

He tried to think of various things; he gazed at the common objects around and mused about them. He thought of a conversation he had had during dinner with the waiter at the hotel, about a dreadful murder which had created much stir of late.

As this last recollection came over him he started to his feet, for something strange had again come over him. An all-powerful desire pervaded his mind and seized his will. He jumped up and made off as fast as he could towards the "Petersburg Side."* He had asked someone, a little while before, to show him which was the Petersburg Side, on the other side of the Neva. He had not gone there, however; and he knew very well that it was of no use to go now, for he would certainly not find her at home; he had the address, but she must certainly have gone to Pavlofsk, or Colia would have let him know. If he were to go now, it would merely be out of curiosity; but a sudden, new idea had come into his head.

However, it was something to move on and know where he was going; a minute after he was still moving onwards but without knowing where he was going to. He could no longer think out his new idea. He tried to take an interest in all he saw; in the sky, in the Neva; he spoke to some children he met. He felt his epileptic condition becoming more and more developed. The evening was very close, thunder was heard some way off.

The recollection of a dreadful murder he had talked of came over him once more; of a certain wretch who had ordered a knife by a certain pattern, and deliberately murdered six people with it. My God! he thought, at all events, Rogojin will not murder anyone *like that*, he has—but stay—is it absolutely decided that Rogojin will murder somebody? What a horrible thing for me to imagine it! The blush of shame came over his face at the idea; he stood rooted to the spot—a flood of recol-

* One of the quarters of St. Petersburg.

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lections came over him—the eyes at the station in the morning, at the other station this afternoon, his trial at the little shop window, his questioning of Parfen about the eyes, Parfen's cross, the old woman's blessing—and in the midst of all this to catch himself, once more, looking all about and around him for something or other, goodness knows what! what a silly thing to do! Despair overmastered his soul, he would not go on, he would go back to his hotel; he even turned and went the other way; but a moment after he changed his mind again and went on in the old direction.

Why, here he was on the Petersburg Side already, quite close to the house. Where was his "idea?" he was marching along without it now. Yes, his malady was coming back, it was clear enough; all this gloom and heaviness, all these "ideas," were nothing more nor less than a fit coming on; perhaps he would have a fit this very day.

But just now all the gloom and darkness had fled, his heart felt full of joy and hope, there was no such thing as doubt. And, yes, he hadn't seen *her* for so long, he really must see her, and he wished he could meet Rogojin, he would take his hand, and they would go to her together. His heart was pure, he was no rival of Parfen's; to-morrow, he would go and tell him that he had seen her. Why, he had only come for the sole purpose of seeing her, all the way from Moscow; perhaps she might be here still, who knows? she might not have gone away to Pavlofsk yet?

Yes, all this must be put straight and above board, there must be no more of these obscure abdications like Rogojin's last speech; it must all be clear as day. Can Rogojin be open and honest? He says he does not love her with sympathy and pity; true, he added that "your pity is greater than my love," but he was not quite fair on himself there. H'm! Rogojin reading a book, wasn't this sympathy beginning? did it not show that he comprehended his relations with her? And his story of waiting day and night for her forgiveness; this didn't look quite like passion alone.

And as to *her* face, was that expression of hers nothing but passion, too? could her face express any passion at all just now? oh, it was suffering, it was grief, overwhelming grief of the soul—and here a flood of sad recollections swept over the prince's heart.

Yes, sad and harassing; he remembered how tormented he had been that first day when he thought he observed in her the symptoms of *madness;* he had sunk, very nearly, into

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despair. How could he have left his hold upon her when she ran away from him to Rogojin? He ought to have run after her himself, on foot, rather than wait for news as he had done. But, as if Rogojin can have failed to observe, up to now, that she is mad. H'm, Rogojin attributes her strangeness to other causes, to passion. What insane jealousy! what was it he had given to understand in that suggestion of his? The prince blushed up, and shuddered to his very heart.

But why recall all this? it was insane from both sides. For him, the prince, to love this woman with passion would be almost senseless, certainly cruel, and unmanly. Yes, it would; no, Rogojin is not fair upon himself; he has a large heart; he has aptitude for sympathy. When he learns the truth, and finds what a pitiable being the poor woman is, this injured, mortified, half-insane creature, he will forgive her all the torment she has caused him. He will become her slave, her brother, her friend. Sympathy will teach even Rogojin, it will show him how to reason—oh, how guilty he felt towards Rogojin! and, for a few warm, hasty words spoken in Moscow, Parfen had called him "brother," while he—but no, this was delirium and raving—it would all come right! that gloomy Parfen had implied that his faith was waning, this man must suffer dreadfully. He said he liked to look at that picture; it was not that he liked it, but he felt the need of looking at it. Oh, no, Rogojin was not a mere passionate mortal, he was a champion; he was fighting for the restoration of his dying faith. He *must* have something to hold on to and believe, and some one to believe in. What a strange picture that one of Holbein's is—why, this is the street, and here's the house, No. 16.

The prince rang the bell, and asked for Nastasia Philipovna. The lady of the house came out, and stated that Nastasia had gone to stay with Daria Alexeyevna at Pavlofsk, and might be there some days.

The prince gave his name, which the lady received with some appearance of mysterious secrecy, and left the house. But he went away not as he came. A great change was over him once more; he went blindly and feebly forward; his knees shook under him again; he felt heavy and ill, he was worried anew and tormented by "ideas," his lips were blue and trembled with a feeble, meaningless smile; his demon was upon him once more.

Why so? what had happened to him? why was his brow wet with clammy drops of moisture, and his knees shaking beneath him, and the cold and gloomy feeling fallen upon his soul?

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Was it because he had just seen these dreadful *eyes* again? Why, he had left the summer garden on purpose to see them; that had been his "idea." He had wished to assure himself that he would see them once more at the house. Then why was he so affected now, having seen them as he expected? Just as though he had *not* expected to see them. Yes, they were the very same eyes, that he saw first; they were the *very same*, and no more doubt about it. Yes, they were the eyes he had seen at the station when he was about to take his seat and move off to visit Aglaya. Rogojin had asked him *whose* eyes they were. He had longed, when he rushed out of the station, to go straight to Rogojin and tell him, tell *him* whose eyes they were. But he had stopped at the cutler's shop instead, and wondered feebly over the knives he saw there, and especially over that sixty copeak one with the horn handle.

The dreadful demon had him now, and would not let go of him again.

This demon had whispered to him in the summer garden that if Rogojin must needs watch him from morning to night, and had observed that he had turned back from the Pavlofsk train, he would be sure to go next to *that* house, and would undoubtedly watch for him, the prince, there, the prince who had given Parfen his word that he would not see her, and had not come here for that purpose. Therefore, the prince had hastened off to that house, and what was there in the fact that he had seen Rogojin there? He had only seen a wretched, suffering creature, whose state of mind was gloomy and miserable, but most comprehensible.

In the morning Rogojin had seemed to be trying to keep out of the way; but at the station this afternoon he had stood out, he had remained hidden less than the prince himself; at the house, now, he had stood fifty yards off on the other side of the road, with folded hands, watching, plainly in view and apparently desirous of being seen. He had stood out like an accuser, like a judge, not like a—a what?

And why had not the prince approached him and spoken to him, instead of turning away and pretending he had seen nothing, although their eyes met? (Yes, their eyes had met, and they had looked at each other.) Why, he had himself wished to take Rogojin by the hand and go in together, he had himself determined to go to him on the morrow and tell him that he had seen *her*, he had repudiated his demon as he walked to the house, and his heart had been full of joy.

Was there something in the whole aspect of this fearful man,

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which terrified the prince, and filled him with dreadful presentiment? Yes, he was convinced of it—convinced of what?—Oh how mean and wretched of him to feel this conviction, that presentiment; how he blamed himself for it. "Speak if you dare, and tell me, what *is* the presentiment?" he repeated to himself, over and over again, "put into form, speak out clearly and distinctly. Oh, dishonourable, mean man that I am." The prince flushed up with shame for his own baseness and cowardice, "how shall I ever look this man in the face again? oh mean, mean! My God, what a day this is, and what a nightmare, what a nightmare."

There was a moment, on this long, long journey back from the Petersburg Side, when the prince felt an irresistible desire to go straight to Rogojin's, wait for him, and embrace him with tears of shame and contrition, and tell him all his distrust and dishonouring presentiment once for all, and finish with it—end it—end it.

But here he was back at his hotel.

How often to-day he had thought of this hotel with loathing, its corridor, its rooms, its stairs; how he had dreaded, hated to come back to it, for some reason or other.

"What a regular old woman I am to-day," he had said to himself each time, with annoyance. "I believe in every foolish presentiment that comes into my head."

He stopped for a moment at the door; a great flush of shame came over him: "I am a coward, a wretched coward," he said, and moved forward again; but once more he paused.

The doorway was a dark, gloomy place at any time; but, just at this moment, it was rendered doubly so, by the fact that a thunder-cloud was passing over the house so that the gloom and obscurity of the place was almost opaque.

And in the darkness the prince distinguished a man standing, apparently waiting.

There was nothing particularly significant in the fact that a man was standing back in the doorway, waiting to come out or go upstairs; but the prince felt an irresistible conviction that he knew this man, and that it was Rogojin. The man moved on up the stairs; a moment later the prince passed up stairs, too. His heart froze within him: "In a minute or two I shall know all," he thought.

The staircase led to the first and second corridors of the hotel, along which lay the guests' bedrooms; as is often the case in St. Petersburg houses the staircase was very narrow and very dark.

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On the first landing, which was as small as the necessary turn of the stairs allowed, the corner was pitch dark, and in this corner the prince felt convinced that a man stood concealed; he thought he could even distinguish a figure standing and waiting; he would pass by and not look to the right. He took a step forward, but could bear the uncertainty no longer and turned his head.

The eyes—the eyes of the morning—met his own. The man concealed in the corner had also taken one step forward. For one second they stood face to face.

Suddenly the prince caught the man by the shoulder and twisted him round towards the lighter side, he wished to catch sight of his face.

Rogojin's eyes flashed, and a smile of insanity screwed up the side of his face. His right hand was raised and something glittered in it. The prince did not think of stopping it. All he could remember afterwards was that he seemed to have called out:

"Parfen! I won't believe it!"

Next moment something appeared to gape open before him: a wonderful inner light seemed to illuminate his soul. This lasted perhaps half a second, yet he distinctly remembered hearing the beginning of the wail, the strange, dreadful wail, which burst from his breast of its own accord, and which no power or effort of will on his part could suppress.

Next moment he was absolutely unconscious; gloom, black darkness blotted out reality and vision.

. . . . . .

He had fallen in an epileptic fit.

As is well known, these fits occur instantaneously. The face, especially the eyes, become terribly disfigured, convulsions seize the limbs, a terrible moan or wail bursts from the breast of the sufferer, a wail in which his whole being seems to disappear and be blotted out, so that it is impossible to believe that the man who has just fallen is the same who emitted the dreadful cry. It seems more as though some other being, inside this stricken one, had cried. Many people have borne witness to this impression; and many cannot behold an epileptic fit without mysterious terror, and a feeling of mysticism and dread.

Such a feeling, we must suppose, overtook Rogojin at this moment, and saved the prince's life; for the assassin's knife was actually falling at the instant when the prince's attack supervened.

Rogojin, unconscious of what had happened, and seeing

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the prince disappear head foremost in the darkness, and hearing him strike the stone steps below with a crash, he rushed downstairs, skirting the motionless body, and flung himself headlong out of the hotel, senseless and blind.

The prince's body slipped slowly down the steps till it rested at the bottom, and there it lay quiescent. Very soon, in five minutes or so, he was discovered, and a crowd collected around him.

A mass of blood on the steps near the sufferer's head, gave rise to grave fears. Was it a case of accident, or had there been a crime?

Luckily identification and proper measures for restoration and relief soon followed one another, owing to a fortunate circumstance: Colia Ivolgin had come home to his hotel earlier than he had intended, and finding a note from the prince awaiting him had sped away to the latter's address. Arrived there he order a cup of tea and sat sipping it in the coffee-room. While there he heard excited whispers of someone just found at the bottom of the stairs in a fit; upon which he had jumped up and hurried to the spot, with a presentiment of evil, and at once recognised the prince.

The sufferer was immediately taken to his room, and though he partially regained his consciousness, he lay long in a semi-conscious condition.

The doctor stated that there was no danger to be apprehended from the wound on the head, and as soon as the prince could understand what was going on around him, Colia hired a carriage and took him away to Lebedeff. There he was received with much cordiality, and the departure to the country was hastened on his account. Three days later they were all at Pavlofsk.

V.

LEBEDEFF'S country house was not large, but pretty and convenient, especially that part which was let to the prince.

Here the latter, who looked as well as ever three days after his attack, though he did not feel quite up to the mark as yet, —here he received the visits of several of his old friends. He

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was delighted to see anyone; he was glad to see Lebedeff and his family, who inhabited the wing,—and even old General Ivolgin, who came to see him. Varia and Ptitsin came also, so did Gania, looking dreadfully thin and changed,—and of course Colia. Lebedeff was very jealous of the prince seeing too many people, but the latter insisted on receiving one and all.

"Why not, Lebedeff?" he said laughing, "let them in, one and all. I assure you I have not the slightest reason or desire to hide either myself or my affairs from the public gaze."

The Epanchins had heard of the prince's illness from Colia; they had only just received the news of the sick man being in Pavlofsk, and up to this time had been in a state of considerable bewilderment about him. The general brought the prince's card down from town (where the prince had called, as we are aware), and Mrs. Epanchin had felt convinced that the prince himself would follow his card at once; she was much agitated.

In vain the girls assured her that a man who had not written for six months would not be in such a dreadful hurry to repeat a visit once formerly made, and that probably he had enough to do in town without needing to bustle down to Pavlofsk to see them.

Their mother was quite angry with the very idea of such a thing, and announced her absolute conviction that he would turn up the very next day at latest.

So next day the prince was expected all the morning, and at dinner, tea, and supper; and when he did not appear in the evening, Mrs. Epanchin quarrelled with everyone in the house, finding plenty of pretexts for a row without so much as mentioning the prince's name.

On the third day there was no talk of him at all, until Aglaya remarked at dinner:

"Mamma is cross because the prince hasn't turned up," to which the general replied that it was not the prince's fault.

Mrs. Epanchin misunderstood the observation, and rising from her place she left the room in majestic wrath. In the evening, however, Colia came with the news of the prince's attack. The boy had a smart scolding from Mrs. General for having delayed telling her the news. She rose and insisted on going to St. Petersburg herself, at once, in order to hunt up and bring down a certain great medical celebrity; but her daughters dissuaded her, and pointed out that she had much better go and see the sick man herself, and take them with her.

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Aglaya, however, suggested that it was a little unceremonious to go *en masse* to see him.

"Very well then, stay at home," said Mrs. Epanchin, "and a very good thing too, for Evgenie Pavlovitch is coming down and there's no one at home to receive him."

Of course, after this, Aglaya went with the rest; in fact she had never had the slightest intention of doing otherwise.

Prince S., who was in the house, was requested to escort the ladies. He had been much interested when he first heard of the prince from the Epanchins. It appeared that they had known one another before, and had spent some time together in a little provincial town. Prince S. had greatly taken to him, and was delighted with the opportunity of meeting an old friend. The general had not come down from town as yet, nor had Evgenie Pavlovitch arrived. It was not more than two or three hundred yards from the Epanchins' house to Lebedeff's.

The first disagreeable impression experienced by Mrs. Epanchin at the prince's was to find him surrounded by a whole assembly of other guests—not to mention the fact that some of those present were particularly detestable in her eyes.

The next annoying circumstance was when an apparently strong and healthy young fellow, well dressed, and smiling, came forward to meet her on the balcony, instead of the half-dying unfortunate whom she had expected to see.

Lebedeff, Ptitsin, and General Ivolgin hastened to find chairs for the ladies; Varia greeted the girls joyfully, but in a whisper as usual.

"I must admit, prince, I was a little put out to see you up and about like this,—I expected to find you an interesting invalid in bed; but I give you my word, I was only annoyed for an instant, before I collected my thoughts properly. I am always wiser on second thoughts, and I daresay you are the same. I assure you I am as glad to see you well as though you were my own son,—yes, and more; and if you don't believe me the more shame to you, and it's not my fault. Are you here for a long stay?"

"All the summer, and perhaps longer."

"You are alone, aren't you,—not married?"

"No, I'm not married!" replied the prince, smiling at the ingenuousness of this little feeler.

"Oh, you needn't laugh! these things do happen, you know! now then—why didn't you come to us? we have a wing quite empty; just as you like, of course. Do you lease it from *him*?

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—this fellow I mean," she added, nodding towards Lebedeff. "And why does he always twist himself about so?"

"Aglaya Ivonovna," said General Ivolgin at this point, "you seem to be looking at me with some surprise—may I introduce myself—General Ivolgin!—I carried you in my arms as a baby."

"Delighted, I'm sure," said Aglaya; "I am acquainted with Varvara Ardalionovna and Nina Alexandrovna;" Aglaya was working hard to restrain herself from bursting out laughing.

Mrs. Epanchin flushed up; some accumulation of spleen in her suddenly needed an outlet. She could not bear this General Ivolgin whom she had once known, long ago,—in society.

"You are deviating from the truth, sir, as usual!" she remarked rudely, and boiling over with indignation; "you never carried her in your life!"

"You have forgotten the circumstance, mother,—he really did carry me about,—in Tver, don't you know,—we lived there then. I was six years old, I remember. He made me a bow and arrow, and I shot a pigeon. Don't you remember shooting a pigeon, you and I, one day?" said Aglaya.

"Yes, and he made me a helmet out of a band-box, and a little wooden sword,—I remember!" said Adelaida.

"Yes, I remember too!" said Alexandra; "you quarrelled about the wounded pigeon, and Adelaida was put in the corner, and stood there with her helmet and sword and all."

The poor general had merely made the remark about having carried Aglaya in his arms because he always did so begin a conversation with young people. But it happened that this time he had really hit upon the truth,—though he had himself entirely forgotten the fact. But when Adelaida and Aglaya recalled the episode of the pigeon and all, his mind became filled with the memories called up, and it is impossible to describe how this poor old man, usually half drunk, was touched and impressed by the recollection.

"I remember—I remember it all!" he cried, "I was Captain then; you were such a tiny lovely little thing,—Nina Alexandrovna!—Gania, listen. I was received then by General Epanchin."

"Yes, and look what you have come to now!" interrupted Mrs. Epanchin. "However, I see you have not quite drunk your better feelings away; but you've broken your wife's heart, sir,—and instead of giving your children an example you have spent your time in public-houses and debtors' prisons! Go away, my friend, stand in some corner and weep and

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bemoan your fallen dignity and worth, and perhaps God will forgive you yet! Go, go! I'm serious! there's nothing so favourable for repentance as to think of the past with feelings of tender remorse!"

There was no need to repeat that she was serious! The general, like all drunkards, was extremely sensitive and easily touched by recollections of his better days. He rose and walked quietly to the door, so meekly and promptly that Mrs. Epanchin was instantly sorry for him.

"Ardalion Alexandrovitch," she cried after him, "wait a moment, we are all sinners! When you feel that your conscience reproaches you a little less, come over to me and we'll have a talk about the past! I daresay I am fifty times more of a sinner than you are! And now go, go, good-bye,—you had better not stay here!" she added, in alarm, as he turned as though to come back.

"Don't go after him just now, Colia, or he'll be ashamed, and the benefit of this moment of grace will be lost!" said the prince, as the boy was hurrying out of the room.

"Quite true! much better go in half-an-hour or so!" said Mrs. General.

"That's what comes of telling the truth for once in one's life!" said Lebedeff.

"Come, come! the less *you* say about it the better—to judge from all I have heard about you!" replied Mrs. Epanchin.

The prince took the first opportunity of informing the Epanchin ladies that he had intended to pay them a visit in spite of his health, if they had not themselves come this afternoon. Mrs. General replied that she hoped he would still do so.

By this time some of the visitors had disappeared. Ptitsin had gone up to Lebedeff's wing; Gania soon followed him.

The latter had behaved modestly, but with dignity, on this first occasion of his meeting with the Epanchins since the wholesale rupture. Twice Mrs. General had deliberately examined him from head to foot; but he had stood fire without flinching.

He was certainly much changed, as anyone could see who had not met him for some time; and this fact seemed to afford Aglaya a good deal of satisfaction.

"That was Gavrila Ardalionovitch, who just went out, wasn't it?" she asked suddenly, interrupting somebody else's conversation to make the remark.

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"Yes, it was," said the prince.

"I hardly knew him; he is much changed, and for the better!"

"I am very much pleased with him!" said the prince.

"He has been very ill," added Varia, blushing with pleasure.

"How has he changed for the better?" asked Mrs. Epanchin. "I don't see any change for the better! what's better in him? Where did you get *that* idea from? *what's* better?"

"There's nothing better than the poor knight!" said Colia, who was standing near the last speaker's chair.

"I quite agree with you there!" said Prince S.

"So do I," said Adelaida, solemnly.

"*What* poor knight?" asked Mrs. Epanchin, irritably looking round at the face of each of the speakers in turn; seeing, however, that Aglaya was blushing, she added:

"What nonsense you are all talking; what do you mean by Poor Knight?"

"It's not the first time this impudent little boy (Colia), your favourite playmate, has shown his impudence by twisting old jokes into the conversation," said Aglaya, haughtily, and angrily.

Every time that Aglaya showed temper, and this happened very often, there was so much childish pouting, "school girlishness," as it were, about her apparent wrath, that it was impossible to avoid smiling at her, to Aglaya's unutterable indignation; on these occasions she would say, "How can they, how *dare* they laugh at me?"

This time everyone laughed at her, the sisters, Prince S., our hero, and Colia. Aglaya was dreadfully indignant, and looked twice as pretty in her wrath.

"He's always twisting up what one says," she cried,

"I am only repeating your own exclamation!" said Colia. "A month ago you were turning over the pages of your 'Don Quixote,' and suddenly called out 'there is nothing better than a poor knight,' I don't know whom you were referring to, of course, whether to 'Don Quixote,' or Evgenie Pavlovitch, or someone else, but you certainly said these words, and we all chaffed you about it for some time after."

"I see you are inclined to go a little too far, my good boy, with your guesses," said Mrs. Epanchin, with some show of annoyance.

"But it's not I alone," cried Colia; "they all talked about it, and they do still; why, just now Prince S. and Adelaida Ivanovna and all declared that they up held 'the poor knight;'

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so evidently there does exist a 'poor knight;' and I think if it had been Adelaida Ivanovna, instead of Aglaya Ivanovna, we should have known long ago who the 'poor knight' was."

"Come, you mustn't chaff me," said Adelaida.

"Yes, but you wouldn't draw his portrait for us, that's where you are to blame. Aglaya Ivanovna asked you to draw his portrait at that time, and told you the whole of the subject as it was to be done. She invented it herself, and you wouldn't."

"What was I to draw? whom? According to the lines she quoted:

'From his face he never lifted
That eternal mask of steel.'

What sort of a face could I draw? I couldn't draw a mask."

"I don't know what you are driving at; what mask do you mean?" said Mrs. Epanchin, irritably. She began to see pretty clearly what it all meant, and whom they referred to by the generally accepted title of "poor knight." But what specially struck her was that the prince was looking so uncomfortable, if not absolutely confused, blushing like a ten-year-old child.

"Well, have you finished your silly joke?" she added, "and am I to be told what this 'poor knight' means, or is it a solemn secret which cannot be approached lightly?"

But they all laughed on.

"It's simply that there is a Russian poem," began Prince S., evidently anxious to change the conversation, "a strange thing, without beginning or end, and all about a 'poor knight.' A month or so ago, we were all talking and laughing, and looking up a subject for one of Adelaida's pictures—you know it is the principal business of this family to find subjects for Adelaida's pictures. Well, we happened upon this 'poor knight.' I don't remember who thought of it first—"

"Oh! Aglaya Ivanovna did," said Colia.

"Very likely — I don't recollect," continued Prince S. "Some of us laughed at the subject; some liked it; but she declared that, in order to make a picture of the gentleman, she must first see his face. We then began to think over all our friends' faces to see if any of them would do, and none suited us, and so the matter stood; that's all. I don't know why Nicolai Ardalionovitch has brought up the joke now; what was appropriate and funny *then*, has quite lost all interest by this time."

"Probably there's some new silliness about it," said Mrs. Epanchin, sarcastically.

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"There is no silliness about it at all—only the profoundest regard and seriousness," said Aglaya, very seriously. She had quite recovered her temper; in fact, from certain signs, it was fair to conclude that she was delighted to see this joke going further and further; and a careful observer might have remarked that her satisfaction dated from the moment when the fact of the prince's confusion became apparent to all, and grew with the growth of his discomfort.

"'Profound regard!' What nonsense! First, insane giggling, and then, all of a sudden, a display of 'profound regard.' Why regard? Tell me at once, why have you suddenly developed this 'profound regard,' eh?"

"Because," replied Aglaya, "in the poem the knight is described as a man capable of fixing up, and living up to an ideal all his life. That sort of thing is not to be found every day among the men of our times. In the poem it is not stated exactly what the ideal was, but it was evidently a revelation of pure Beauty, and the love-sick knight wore round his neck, instead of a scarf, a scroll and device—A. N. B.—the meaning of which is not explained."

"No, A. N. *D.*," corrected Colia.

"I say A. N. B., and so it shall be!" cried Aglaya, irritably, "and whatever it was, it would certainly have made no difference to the poor knight; he had chosen his ideal, and he was bound to serve her, and break heads for her, and acknowledge her as the ideal of Pure Beauty, whatever she might say or do afterwards. If she had taken to stealing, he would have championed her just the same. I think the poet desired to embody in this one picture the whole spirit of mediæval chivalry and of the platonic love of a pure and high-souled knight. The poor knight is very like a Don Quixote, but serious and not comical. I used not to understand him, and laughed at him, but now I love the poor knight, and respect his actions."

So ended Aglaya; and, to look at her, it was difficult, indeed, to judge whether she was joking or in earnest.

"Pooh! he was a poet, and his actions were the actions of a fool," said Mrs. Epanchin; "and as for you, young woman, you ought to know better; at all events, you are not to talk like that again. What poem is it? Recite it! I want to hear this poem! I have hated poetry all my life; prince, you must excuse this nonsense. We neither of us like this sort of thing!"

They certainly were put out, both of them.

The prince wished to say something, but he was too confused,

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and could not get his words out. Aglaya, who had taken so much liberty in her little speech, was the only person present, perhaps, who was not in the least embarrassed. She seemed delighted with herself.

She now rose solemnly from her seat, walked to the centre of the balcony, and stood in front of the prince's chair. All looked on with some surprise, and Prince S., and her sisters, with feelings of decided alarm, to see what new frolic she was up to; it had gone quite far enough already, they thought. Aglaya evidently thoroughly enjoyed the affectation and ceremony with which she was introducing her recitation of the poem.

Mrs. Epanchin was just wondering whether she would not forbid the performance after all, when, at the very moment that Aglaya commenced her declamation, two new guests, both talking loudly, entered the balcony. The new arrivals were General Epanchin and a young gentleman.

Their entrance caused some agitation.

VI.

THE young fellow accompanying the general was a man of about twenty-eight, tall, and well built, with a handsome and clever face, and bright eyes, full of fun and intelligence.

Aglaya did not so much as glance at the new arrivals, but went on with her recitation, glaring at the prince the while in an affected manner, and at him alone. It was clear to him that she was doing all this with some special object.

But the new guests at least eased his slightly strained and uncomfortable position.

Seeing them approaching, he rose from his chair, and nodding amicably to the general, signed to him not to interrupt the recitation. He then got behind his chair, and stood there with his left hand resting on the back of it. This was a change at least, and he went on listening to the ballad with far less embarrassment than before. Mrs. Epanchin had also twice beckoned the new arrivals to be quiet, and stay where they were.

The prince was much interested in the young man who had just entered. He easily concluded that this was Evgenie Pavlovitch Radomski, of whom he had already heard mention

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several times. He was puzzled, however, by the young fellow's plain clothes, for he had always heard of Evgenie Pavlovitch as a military man.

An ironical smile played on Evgenie's lips all the while the recitation was proceeding, which showed that he, too, was in the secret of the "poor knight" joke. But it had become quite a different matter with Aglaya. All the affectation of manner which she had displayed at the beginning quite disappeared as the ballad proceeded. She gave the words out with so serious and exalted a manner, and with so much taste and feeling, that she even seemed to justify the affectation with which she had stepped into the middle of the balcony; and, in her conduct, it was impossible to discern anything but the appropriate rendering of the spirit of the poem, and her boundless regard and respect for that which she had undertaken to interpret.

Her eyes were aglow with inspiration, and a slight convulsion of rapture passed over her lovely features once or twice. She continued to recite:

"Once there came a vision glorious,
Mystic, dreadful, wondrous fair;
Burned itself into his spirit,
And abode for ever there!

Never more—from that sweet moment—
Gazéd he on woman kind;
He was dumb to love and wooing
And to all their graces blind.

Full of love for that sweet vision,
Brave and pure he took the field;
With his blood he stained the letters
A. M. D. upon his shield.

'Lumen cæli, sancta Rosa!'
Shouting on the foe he fell,
And like thunder fell his war-cry
On the cowering infidel.

Then within his lowly castle,
Home returned, he dreamed his days—
Silent, sad,—and when death took him
He was mad, the legend says."

And so on.

While recalling all this afterwards the prince could not for the life of him understand how to reconcile the beautiful, sincere, pure nature of the girl with the irony of this jest. That it was a jest there was no doubt whatever; he knew that

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well enough, and had a good reason, too, for his conviction; for during her recitation of the ballad Aglaya had deliberately changed the letters A. M. D. into N. P. B.—he was quite sure she had not done this by accident, and that his ears had not deceived him, she certainly did it.

At all events Aglaya's sally, which was a joke of course, if rather a crude one, was premeditated. They had evidently talked (and laughed) over the "poor knight" joke a month ago.

Besides Aglaya had brought out these letters N. P. B. not only without the slightest appearance of joke or irony, or even particular accentuation, by way of calling attention to the hidden humour in the idea, but with so even and unbroken an appearance of seriousness that assuredly any one might have supposed that these initials were the original ones written in the ballad. The thing made an uncomfortable impression upon the prince. Of course Mrs. Epanchin saw nothing either in the change of initials or in the insinuation embodied therein. General Epanchin only knew that there was a recitation of verses going on, and took no further interest in the matter. Of the rest of the audience, many had understood the allusion and wondered both at the daring of the lady and at the object underlying it, but tried to show no sign of their feelings. But Evgenie Pavlovitch (as the prince was ready to wager any amount) both comprehended and tried his best to show that he comprehended; his smile was too faithful a witness to leave any doubt on that point.

"How beautiful that is!" cried Mrs. Epanchin, with sincere admiration. "Whose is it?"

"Pouschkin's, mamma, of course! don't disgrace us all by showing your ignorance," said Adelaida.

"As soon as we reach home give me the book to read, *mind!*"

"I don't think we have a copy of Pouschkin in the house."

"There are a couple of torn volumes lying about somewhere; they have been lying about from time immemorial," added Alexandra.

"Send Feodor or Alexey up by the very first train to buy a copy then.—Aglaya, come here—kiss me, dear, you recited beautifully! but," she added in a whisper, "if you were sincere I am sorry for you; if it was a joke I do not approve of the feelings which prompted you to do it, and in such a case you would have done far better not to recite the ballad at all. Do you understand?—now come along, young woman; we've sat here too long; I'll speak to you about this another time."

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Meanwhile the prince took the opportunity of greeting General Epanchin, and the general introduced Evgenie Pavlovitch to him.

"I caught him up on the road to your house; he heard we were all here," explained the general.

"Yes, and I heard that you were here, too," added Evgenie Pavlovitch; "and since I had long promised myself the pleasure of seeking not only your acquaintance, but also your friendship, I did not wish to waste time but came straight on. So sorry to hear that you are unwell."

"Oh, but I'm quite well, thank you, and very glad to make your acquaintance. Prince S. has often spoken about you," said the prince.

The latter remarked that Evgenie Pavlovitch's plain clothes had evidently produced a powerful impression upon the company present, so much so that all other interests seemed to succumb before this surprising fact. To the many questions as to this matter put to him by the general, Prince S., and others, he explained that he had obtained leave for a year in order to visit his property and perhaps go abroad besides; but the general surprise was not explained away, and it was clear that the explanation was not considered satisfactory.

"I see the 'poor knight' has come on the scene again!" said Evgenie Pavlovitch, stepping up to Aglaya's side.

To the amazement of the prince, who overheard the remark, Aglaya looked haughtily and inquiringly at the questioner, as though she would give him to know, once for all, that there could be no talk between *them* about the "poor knight," and that she did not understand his question. The guests rose to go, at last; but the evening's episodes were not quite over yet.

Mrs. General had not reached the highroad which skirts the park at Pavlofsk, when suddenly there dashed by a smart open carriage, drawn by a pair of beautiful white horses. Having passed some ten yards beyond the house, the carriage suddenly drew up, and one of the two ladies seated in it turned sharp round as though she had just caught sight of some acquaintance, whom she particularly wished to see.

"Evgenie Pavlovitch! is that you?" cried a loud, but sweet voice, which caused the prince, and, perhaps, one or two others, to tremble. "Well, I *am* glad I've found you at last! I've sent to town for you twice to-day myself! my people have been searching for you up hill and down dale!"

Evgenie Pavlovitch stood on the bottom step of the terrace,

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looking like one struck by lightning. Mrs. Epanchin stood still too, but not with the frightened expression of Evgenie, she gazed haughtily at the audacious person, who had addressed her companion, and then turned a fixed look of astonishment upon Evgenie himself.

"There's news!" continued the voice; "you need not be anxious about Kupferof's bills—Rogojin has bought them up, I persuaded him to!—I daresay we shall settle Biscup too, for old sake's sake! so it's all right, you see! *au revoir* to-morrow, ta, ta!" The carriage moved on, and soon disappeared.

"The woman's mad!" cried Evgenie, at last, blushing with anger, and looking confusedly around. "I don't know what she's talking about! What bills? Who is she?" Mrs. Epanchin continued to watch his face for a couple of seconds; then she marched briskly and haughtily away towards her own house, the rest following her.

A minute afterwards, Evgenie Pavlovitch reappeared on the prince's terrace in great agitation.

"Prince," he said, "tell me the truth; do you know what all this means?"

"I know nothing whatever about it!" replied the latter, who was, himself, in a state of nervous excitement.

"No?"

"No!"

"Well, nor do I!" said Evgenie Pavlovitch, bursting out laughing of a sudden; "I haven't the slightest knowledge of any such bills as she mentioned, I swear I haven't! What's the matter, are you fainting?"

"Oh, no—no—I'm all right, I assure you!" said the prince, feebly.

VII.

THE day after the events recorded above, the prince had the honour of receiving a visit from Adelaida and her lover, Prince S.

They came, ostensibly, to inquire after his health. They had wandered out for a walk, and called in "by accident," and talked for the whole of the time they were with him about a certain most lovely tree in the park, which Adelaida had se

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her heart upon for a picture; this and a little amiable conversation on Prince S.'s part occupied the time, and not a word was said about last evening's episodes. At length Adelaida burst out laughing, apologised, and explained that they had come *incognito*; from which act, and from the circumstance that they said nothing about the prince either walking back with them or coming to see them later on, the latter inferred that he was in Mrs. Epanchin's black books, by reason of the carriage episode of last night.

At length, however, just as the visitors were on the point of departing, Prince S. seemed suddenly to recollect himself: "Oh yes, by-the-bye," he said, "do you happen to know, my dear Lef Nicolaievitch, who that lady was who called out to Evgenie Pavlovitch last night, from the carriage?"

"It was Nastasia Philipovna," said the prince; "didn't you know that? I cannot tell you who her companion was."

"But what on earth did she mean? I assure you it is a real riddle to me—to me, and the others too!" Prince S. seemed to be under the influence of sincere astonishment.

"She spoke of some bills of Evgenie Pavlovitch's," said the prince, simply, "which Rogojin had bought up for some one; and implied that Rogojin would not press him."

"Oh, I heard that much, my dear fellow! but the thing is so impossibly absurd! What bills can Evgenie have out? A man of property like Evgenie, ridiculous! Besides, he cannot possibly be on such intimate terms with Nastasia Philipovna as she gave us to understand; that's the principal part of the mystery! He has given me his word that he knows nothing whatever about the matter, and of course I believe him. Well, the question is, my dear prince, and this is what I wish to get at, do you know anything about the matter? Has any sort of hint or suspicion of the meaning of it come across you?"

"No, I know nothing whatever about it; I assure you I have nothing at all to do with it."

"Oh, prince, prince! what a fellow you have become! I assure you, I hardly know you for your old self. How can you suppose that I ever suggested you could have had a finger in such a business? But you are not quite yourself to-day, I can see." He embraced the prince, *à la Russe*, and kissed him.

"What do you mean though," asked our hero, "by 'such a business?' I don't see any particular 'business' about it at all!"

"Oh, undoubtedly, this person wished somehow, and for

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some reason, to do Evgenie Pavlovitch a bad turn, by attributing to him—before witnesses—qualities, or bad practices, which he neither has nor can have," replied Prince S. drily enough.

Our hero looked disturbed, but continued to gaze intently and questioningly into Prince S.'s face. The latter, however, remained silent.

"Why should it not be simply a matter of bills?" the prince said at last, with some impatience.

"But I ask you, my dear sir, how can there be anything in common between Evgenie Pavlovitch, and—her, and again with Rogojin? I tell you he is a man of immense property—as I know for a fact; and he has further expectations from his uncle. Simply Nastasia Philipovna—"

Prince S. paused, as though unwilling to continue talking about Nastasia Philipovna.

"Then at all events he knows her!" remarked the prince, after a moment's silence.

"Oh, that may be, but if so, he must have known her some time since, two or three years at least. He used to know Totski. At all events, it is impossible that there should be any intimacy between them *now*; she has not even *been* in the place—many people don't even know that she has returned from Moscow! I have only observed her carriage about for the last three days or so."

"It's a lovely carriage," said Adelaida.

"Yes, it was a beautiful turn out, certainly!"

The visitors left the house, however, on no less friendly terms with the prince than before, in spite of the delicate nature of the subject discussed. But the visit was one of the greatest importance to the prince, from his own point of view. Admitting that he had his suspicions from the moment of the occurrence of the event last night, perhaps even before, that Nastasia had some mysterious end in view, yet this visit confirmed his suspicions and justified his fears. It was all clear to him; Prince S. was wrong, perhaps, in his view of the matter, but he was *somewhat near* the truth, and was right in so far as that he understood there was an intrigue of some sort going on. Perhaps Prince S. saw it all more clearly than he had allowed his hearers to understand; and, at all events, nothing could be plainer than that he and Adelaida had come in for the express purpose of fishing for explanations. And if all this were so, then *she* must have some terrible object in view, for everything connected with the woman bore terror with it! what was it? at all events there was no stopping *her;* as the prince knew from experience, there was

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no chance of stopping *her* in the performance of anything she had set her mind to! "Oh mad, mad, mad!" thought the poor prince.

Another visitor this morning was Gania.

The latter spoke about Nastasia Philipovna, and informed the prince that she had come to Pavlofsk four days since, and was staying here with her old friend Daria Alexeyevna; he added that her admirers were already legion, but that she was very particular as to whom she would know. During these few days, one young man in the place had broken off his engagement because of her; another had been cursed by his father on her account. Nastasia's behaviour had been most exemplary in every way; and all the ladies in Pavlofsk were jealous of her beauty, her taste, and her carriage.

"As for yesterday's episode," continued Gania, "of course it was pre-arranged." Here he paused, as though expecting to be asked how he knew that. But the prince did not inquire concerning Evgenie Pavlovitch. Gania stated that he believed the former had not known Nastasia Philipovna in past years, but that he had probably been introduced to her by somebody in the park during these last four days. As to the question of the "bills" she had spoken of, there might easily be something in that; for though Evgenie was undoubtedly a man of property, yet certain of his affairs were equally undoubtedly in disorder. Arrived at this interesting point, Gania suddenly broke off and took his departure. The prince was glad enough to be left alone. He went out of the garden, crossed the road, and entered the park. He wished to reflect, and to make up his mind as to a certain "step." This step was one of those things, however, which are not thought out, as a rule, but decided upon or against hastily, and, once for all, without much reflection, on impulse. The fact is, he felt a longing to leave all this and go —go anywhere, only it were far enough, and at once, without bidding farewell to anyone. He felt a presentiment that if he remained but a few days in this place, and among these people and things, he would be fixed and fastened irrevocably and permanently among them. However, in a very few minutes he decided that to run away was impossible; that it would be cowardly and mean; that such great problems lay before him here for solution, that he had no right to leave them unsolved, or at least to refuse to give all his energy and strength to their clearing up. Having come to this determination, he turned and went home, his walk having lasted more than a quarter of an hour; at this moment he was a thoroughly unhappy man.

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Late in the evening Colia came in with a budget of Petersburg and Pavlofsk news. He did not dwell much on the Petersburg news, which consisted chiefly of intelligence about his friend Hippolyte, whose consumption was very bad, and threatened to end fatally in a few days. Colia had gone straight to the Epanchins' from the station.

"There's the deuce and all going on there!" he said; "first of all the row about the carriage last night, and I think there must be something new—some new phase of that question, though I didn't like to ask. Not a word about *you*, prince, the whole time! and another curious thing: Mrs. Epanchin was so angry that she called Varia to her—Varia was talking to the girls, and turned her out of the house 'once for all,' she said. I heard it from Varia herself—Mrs. General was quite polite, but firm; and when Varia said good-bye to the girls, she told them nothing about it, and they didn't know they were saying good-bye for the last time. I'm sorry for Varia, and for Gania too; he isn't half a bad fellow in spite of his faults, and I shall never forgive myself for not liking him before! I don't know whether I ought to continue to go to the Epanchins' now," concluded Colia—"I like to be quite independent of others, and of other people's quarrels if I can; but I must think over it."

"I don't think you need break your heart over Gania," said the prince; "for if what you say is true, he must be considered dangerous in the Epanchin household, and if so, certain sweet hopes of his must be on their mind."

"What? what hopes?" cried Colia; "you surely don't mean Aglaya?—oh, dear, no!—oh, no!—"

"You're a dreadful sceptic, prince," continued Colia, after a moment's silence; "I have observed of late that you have grown sceptical about everything; you don't seem to believe in people as you did, and are always attributing motives and so on—am I using the word 'sceptic' in its proper sense?"

"I believe so; but I'm not sure; it isn't a Russian word!"

"Well, I'll change it, right or wrong; I'll say that you are not sceptical, but *jealous*. There! you are deadly jealous of Gania, and a certain proud damsel! come!" Colia jumped up, with these words, and burst out laughing. He laughed as he had never laughed before, and still more when he saw the prince flushing up to his temples. He thought it a grand idea that the prince should be jealous about Aglaya. However, he stopped at last, seeing that the other did not quite like his joke; and the conversation continued, on less delicate subjects, for an hour or more.

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Next day the prince had to visit town, on business. Returning in the afternoon, he happened upon General Epanchin at the station. The latter seized his hand, glancing around nervously, as if he were afraid of being caught wrong-doing, and dragged him into a first-class compartment for a talk. He was burning to speak about something of importance.

"In the first place, my dear prince, don't be angry with me; I would have come to see you yesterday, but I didn't know how Lizabetha Prokofievna would like it. My dear fellow, my house is simply a hell just now, a sort of sphinx has taken up its abode there. We live in an atmosphere of riddles; I can't make head or tail of anything. As for *you*, I feel sure you are the least to blame of any of us, though you certainly have been the cause of a good deal of trouble. You see it's all very pleasant to be a philanthropist; but it can be carried too far. Of course I admire virtue, and I esteem my wife, but—"

The general wandered on in this disconnected way for a long time; it was clear that he was much disturbed by some circumstance which he could make nothing of.

"It is plain to me, that *you* are not in it at all," he continued, at last, a little less vaguely, "but perhaps you had better not come to our house for a little while. I ask you in the friendliest manner, mind; just till the wind changes again. As for Evgenie Pavlovitch," he continued with some excitement, "the whole thing is a calumny, a dirty calumny. It is simply a plot, an intrigue, to upset our plans and to stir up a quarrel between us. You see, prince, I'll tell you privately, Evgenie and ourselves have not said a word yet, we have no formal understanding, we are in no way bound on either side, but the word may be said very soon, don't you see, *very* soon, and all this is most injurious, and is meant to be so, why? I'm sure I can't tell you. She's an extraordinary woman, you see, an eccentric woman; I tell you, I am so frightened of that woman that I can't sleep. What a carriage that was, and where did it come from, eh? I declare, I was base enough to suspect Evgenie at first; but it seems certain that that cannot be the case, and if so, why is she interfering here? That's the riddle, what does she want? is it to keep Evgenie to herself? But, my dear fellow, I swear to you—here, here's my cross—I swear he doesn't even *know* her, and as for those bills, why, the whole thing is bosh, fiction! and the familiarity of the woman; it's quite clear we must treat the impudent creature's attempt with disdain, and redouble our courtesy towards Evgenie. I told my wife so.

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"Now I'll tell you my secret conviction; my wife is still angry with me, and worries me on account of the past, though I assure you that all that time I was as blameless as anyone could be in the matter; I blush at the very idea of such a suspicion. And now she turns up again like this, when I thought she had finally disappeared! Where's Rogojin all this time? I thought she was Mrs. Rogojin, long ago."

In a word, the old fellow was in a high state of mental perturbation.

The whole of the journey, which occupied nearly an hour, he continued in this strain, putting questions and answering them himself, shrugging his shoulders, pressing the prince's hand, and assuring the latter that, at all events, he had no suspicion whatever of *him*. This last assurance was satisfactory at all events.

The general finished by informing the prince that Evgenie's uncle was head of one of the civil service departments, and rich, very rich, and important, a *gourmand*—"And, well, Heaven preserve him, of course—but Evgenie gets his money, don't you see? but for all this I'm uncomfortable, I don't know why, for there's something in the air, I feel there's something nasty in the air, and I'm by no means comfortable," and so on.

It was not until the third day, that the formal reconciliation between the prince and the Epanchins took place.

VIII.

IT was seven in the evening, and the prince was just preparing to go out for a walk in the park, when, suddenly, Mrs. Epanchin appeared on the balcony.

"In the first place, don't dare to suppose," she began, "that I am going to apologize. Nonsense, you are entirely to blame yourself."

The prince remained silent.

"Are you to blame, or not?"

"No, certainly not, no more than yourself."

"Oh, very well, let's sit down at all events, for I don't intend to stand up all day; now then, in the second place, did you, or did you not send a letter to Aglaya, a couple of months, or so, since, about Easter tide?"

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"Yes!"

"What for? What was your object? Show me the letter."

Mrs. Epanchin's eyes flashed; she was almost trembling with impatience.

"I have not got the letter," said the prince timidly, and extremely surprised at the turn the conversation had taken. "If anyone has it, if it still exists, Aglaya Ivanovna must have it."

"No finessing, please. What did you write about?"

"I am not finessing, and I am not in the least afraid of telling you; but I don't see the slightest reason why I should *not* have written."

"Be quiet, you can talk afterwards; what was the letter about? Why are you blushing?"

The prince was silent. At last he spoke.

"I don't understand your thoughts, Lizabetha Prokofievna; but, I can see that the fact of my having written, is for some reason repugnant to you. You must admit that I have a perfect right to refuse to answer your questions; but, in order to show you that I am neither ashamed of the letter, nor sorry that I wrote it, and that I am not in the least inclined to blush about it" (here the prince's blushes redoubled!), "I will repeat the substance of my letter, for I think I know it almost by heart."

So saying, the prince went through the letter almost word for word, as he had written it.

"My goodness, what utter twaddle, and what may all this nonsense have signified in your mind, pray? if it did convey any meaning at all," said Mrs. Epanchin, cuttingly, after having listened to the prince's repetition of the letter with great attention.

"I really don't absolutely know myself; I know my feeling was very sincere. I had moments at that time full of life and hope."

"What sort of hope?"

"It is difficult to explain, but, at all events, not the hopes you seem to have in your mind at this moment, Hope, well, in a word, hopes for the future, and a feeling of joy that *there*, at all events, I was not entirely a stranger, and a foreigner. I felt an ecstacy in being in my native land, once more; and one fine sunny morning I took up a pen, and just wrote her that letter, but why to *her*, I don't quite know. Sometimes one longs to have a friend near, and I evidently felt the need of one then," added the prince, and paused.

"Are you in love with her?"

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"N—no! I wrote to her as to a sister; I signed myself 'brother.'"

"Oh yes, of course, on purpose, I quite understand."

"It is very painful to me to answer these questions, Mrs. Epanchin."

"I daresay it is; but that's no affair of mine. Now then, assure me truly before heaven, are you lying to me or not?"

"No, I am not lying."

"Are you telling the truth when you say you are not in love?"

"I believe it is the absolute truth."

"'I believe,' indeed! Tfu! Well!—and what's the meaning of the 'poor knight,' eh?"

"I don't know in the least; I wasn't present when the joke was made; it *is* a joke, I suppose, and that's all."

"Well, that's a comfort at all events. You don't suppose she could take any interest in *you*, do you? Why, she called you an 'idiot' herself."

"I think you might have spared me that statement," murmured the prince reproachfully, and almost in a whisper.

"Don't be angry; she is an arbitrary, mad, spoiled girl; if she likes a person she will pitch into him, or her, and chaff them all to their faces; I used to be just such another. But for all that you needn't flatter yourself, my boy, she is not for you; I don't believe in it, and it is not to be. I tell you so at once so that you may take the proper precautions for your safety. Look here now, I want to hear you swear that you are not married to *that* woman?"

"Lizabetha Prokofievna, what *are* you thinking of!" cried the prince almost leaping to his feet in amazement.

"Why? you very nearly did, anyhow."

"Yes—I nearly did," whispered the prince, hanging his head.

"Well then, have you come here for *her?* are you in love with *her?* with *that* creature?"

"I did not come to marry at all," replied the prince.

"Is there anything you hold sacred?"

"There is."

"Then swear you did not come here to marry *her!*"

"I'll swear it by whatever you please."

"I believe you then; you may kiss me, I breathe freely at last; but you must know, my dear friend, Aglaya does not love you, and she shall never be your wife while I am out of my grave; so take your measures in time, do you hear me?"

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"Yes, I hear."

The prince flushed up so red that he could not look her in the face.

"I have waited for you with the greatest impatience (not that you were worth it). Every night I have drenched my pillow with my tears, not for you, my friend, not for you, don't flatter yourself. I have my own grief, always the same, always the same. But I'll tell you why I have been awaiting you so impatiently, because I believe that Providence itself sent you to be a friend and a brother to me. I haven't a friend in the world except Princess Bielokonski, and she is growing as stupid as a sheep from old age. Now then, tell me, yes or no; *do* you know why *she* called out of the carriage the other night?"

"I give you my word of honour that I had nothing to do with the matter and know nothing about it."

"Very well, I believe you. I have my own ideas about the matter; up to yesterday morning I thought it was really Evgenie Pavlovitch who was to blame; now I cannot help agreeing with the others, but why he was made a fool of I cannot understand. However, he is not going to marry Aglaya, I can tell you that. He may be a very excellent fellow, but—so it shall be. I was not at all sure of accepting him before, but now I have quite made up my mind that I won't have him. 'Put me in my coffin first and pop me into my grave, and then you may marry my daughter to whomsoever you please,' so I said to the general this very morning. You see how I trust you, my boy."

"Yes, I quite see, and understand."

Mrs. Epanchin gazed keenly into the prince's eyes; she was anxious to see what impression the news as to Evgenie Pavlovitch had made upon him.

"Do you know anything about Gavrila Ardalionovitch?" she asked at last.

"Oh yes, I know a good deal."

"Did you know he has communications with Aglaya?"

"No, I didn't—certainly," said the prince, trembling a little, and in great agitation; "you say Gavrila Ardalionovitch has private communications with Aglaya?—impossible!"

"Yes, only quite lately. His sister has been working like a rat to clear his way for him all the winter."

"I don't believe it!" said the prince abruptly, after a short pause; "had it been so I should have known it long ago."

"Oh, of course, yes; he would have come and wept out his secret on your bosom. Oh you simpleton—you simpleton!

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anyone can deceive you and take you in like a—like a,—aren't you ashamed of yourself to trust him? can't you see that he humbugs you just as much as ever he pleases?"

"I know very well that he does deceive me occasionally, and he knows that I know it, but—" the prince did not finish his sentence.

"And that's why you trust him, eh? so I should have supposed of you; my goodness, was there ever such a man as you? Tfu! and are you aware, sir, that this Gania, or his sister Varia, have brought her into communication with Nastasia Philipovna?"

"Brought whom?" cried the prince.

"Aglaya."

"I don't believe it! it's impossible! what object could they have?" He jumped up from his chair in his excitement.

"Nor do I believe, in spite of the proofs. The girl is self-willed and fantastic, insane, she's wicked, wicked! I'll repeat it for a thousand years that she's wicked; they *all* are just now, all my daughters, even that 'wet hen' Alexandra. And yet I don't believe it. Because I don't choose to believe it, perhaps, but I don't. Why haven't you been?" she turned sharply on the prince suddenly. "Why didn't you come near us all these three days, eh?"

The prince began to give his reason, but she shut him up again.

"Everybody takes you in and deceives you; you went to town yesterday; I dare swear you were 'done' out of money there by somebody."

"No, on the contrary I received a letter from a claimant renouncing his old former claim on me."

"Nonsense, there's some humbugging in it, you may be sure."

"Come, acknowledge that you are as delighted as I am to hear that there are such people."

"Nonsense, don't you see that all this humility is put on to take you in; you may be sure he is puffed out with vanity in reality."

"No, he has acknowledged himself to be in the wrong. Don't you see that the greater his vanity, the more difficult this admission must have been on his part? Oh what a little, little child you are, Lizabetha Prokofievna."

"Are you tempting me to box your ears for you, or what?"

"Not at all. I am only proving that you are glad to hear of the letter I received. Why conceal your real feelings? You always like to do it."

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"Never you come near my house again!" cried Mrs. Epanchin, pale with rage. "Don't let me see as much as a *shadow* of you about the place. Do you hear?"

"Oh, yes, and in three days you'll come and ask me down yourself. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, now? These are your best feelings; you only torment yourself this way!"

"I'll die before I invite you. I shall forget your very name. I've forgotten it already."

She started from her place and marched towards the door.

"But I'm ordered away from your house as it is, without your added threats!" cried the prince after her.

"What? Who forbade you to come?"

She had twisted round so suddenly that one might have supposed a needle had been stuck into her.

The prince hesitated about answering. He perceived that he had accidentally, but very thoroughly, "put his foot in it" this time.

"*Who* forbade you?" cried Mrs. Epanchin once more.

"Aglaya Ivanovna told me—"

"When? Speak—quick!"

"She sent to say, yesterday morning, that I was never to dare come near the house again."

Lizabetha Prokofievna stood like a stone, musing.

"What did she send? Whom? Was it that boy?—was it a message?—quick!"

"I had a note," said the prince.

"Where is it? Give it here, at once."

The prince thought a moment. Then he pulled out of his waistcoat pocket an untidy slip of paper, on which was scrawled:

"Prince Lef Nicolaievitch—If you think fit, after all that has passed, to honour our house with a visit, I can assure you you will not find me among the number of those who are in any way delighted to see you. AGLAYA EPANCHIN."

Mrs. Epanchin reflected a moment. The next minute she flew at the prince, seized his hand, and dragged him after her to the door.

"Quick—come along," she cried, breathless with agitation and impatience, "come along with me this moment."

"But you declared I wasn't to come—"

"Don't be a simpleton. You behave just as though you weren't a man at all. Come on, I shall see, now, with my own eyes; I shall see all."

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"Well, let me get my hat, at least."

"Here's your miserable hat— He couldn't even choose a respectable shape for his hat! Come on! She did that because I took your part and said you ought to have come—little vixen!—else she would never have sent you that silly little note. It's a most improper note, I call it; most improper for such an intelligent, well brought-up girl to write. H'm! I daresay she *was* annoyed that you didn't come; but she ought to have known that one can't write like that to an idiot like you, for that you'd be sure to behave as you have done." Mrs. Epanchin was dragging the prince along with her all this time, and never let go of his hand for an instant. "What are you listening for?" she added, seeing that she had committed herself a little. "She wants a clown like you—she hasn't seen one for some time—to play with; that's why she is anxious for you to come to the house. And right glad I am that she'll make a thorough good fool of you. You deserve it; and she can do it—oh! she can, indeed—as well as most people."

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PART III.

I.

LIZABETHA PROKOFIEVNA'S chief and permanent anxiety was Aglaya.

But there had been a month in Mrs. Epanchin's life when she really seemed free of care and worry.

Adelaida's fate was settled—a great relief in itself; and with her name that of Aglaya's was linked, in society gossip. People whispered that Aglaya, too, was "as good as engaged;" and Aglaya always looked so sweet and behaved so well (during this period), that the mother's heart was full of joy, and this month of her life was full of rest and comfort to her soul. Of course, Evgenie Pavlovitch must be thoroughly studied first, before the final step should be taken; but, really, how lovely dear Aglaya had become—she actually grew prettier every day! And then— Yes, and then—this abominable prince showed his nose once more, and everything went topsy-turvey at once, and everyone in the house went as mad as March hares.

What had really happened?

If it had been any other family than the Epanchins' nothing particular would have happened. But, thanks to Mrs. Epanchin's invariable fussiness and fidgety nature, there could not be the slightest hitch in the simplest matters of everyday life, but she immediately saw in it the most dreadful and alarming consequences, and suffered accordingly.

What then must have been her condition, when, among all the imaginary anxieties and calamities which so constantly beset her, she saw looming ahead serious cause for annoyance and anxiety—something really worthy of some heart-burning. and doubt, and worry.

"How dared they, how *dared* they write that abominable anonymous letter informing me that Aglaya is in communication with Nastasia Philipovna?" she thought, as she dragged the prince along towards her own house, and again when she reached it and sat him down at the round table where the family confabulation had already commenced. "How dared they so much as *think* of such a thing? I should *die* with shame if I thought there was a particle of truth in it, or if I

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were to show the letter to Aglaya herself! Who dares play these jokes upon *us*, the Epanchins? *Why* didn't we go to the Yelágin instead of coming down here? I *told* you we had better go to the Yelágin this summer, Ivan Fedorovitch. It's all your fault. I daresay it was that Varia who sent the letter; it's all Ivan Fedorovitch. *That* woman is doing it all for him, I know she is, to show she can still make a fool of him now just as well as she did when he took her the pearl brooch. That prince—I'll never forgive him, I'll never forgive him—Why has Aglaya been hysterical for the last three days? Why does she quarrel with her sisters whom she really *adores*? What are all these riddles of hers that we have to guess? What has Gavrila Ardalionovitch to do with the question? Why did she take upon herself to champion him this morning, and burst into tears over it? Why is there an allusion to that cursed 'poor knight' in the anonymous letter? and why did I rush off to him just now and drag him back here? I do believe I've gone mad at last. What on earth have I done now? to talk to a young fellow about my daughter's secrets—and *such* secrets, having to do with himself, too! Thank goodness, he's an idiot, and a friend of the house! Surely, Aglaya hasn't fallen in love with such a gaby—what an idea! Pfu! we ought all to be under glass cases—myself first of all—and be shown off as curiosities, at ten copeaks a peep!

"I shall never forgive you all this, Ivan Fedorovitch—never. Look at her now. Why doesn't she pitch into him? She said she would, and she doesn't. Look there! she stares at him with all her eyes, and doesn't move; and yet she told him not to come. He looks pale enough; and that abominable chatterbox, Evgenie Pavlovitch, monopolises the whole of the conversation. Nobody else can get a word in. I shall soon find out all about things if I could only get into the talk—"

The prince certainly was very pale. He sat at the table and seemed to be feeling, by turns, sensations of alarm and extreme felicity.

Oh, how frightened he was of looking to one side—one particular corner—whence he knew very well that a pair of familiar black eyes were staring intently at him; and oh, how happy he was to think that he was once more among "them," and occasionally hearing that well-known voice, although she had written and forbidden him to come again.

"What on earth will she say to me now, I wonder!" he thought to himself.

He had not said a word yet; he sat silent and listened to

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Evgenie Pavlovitch's eloquence. The latter had never appeared to so much advantage as on this evening; his spirits were uproariously high.

The prince listened to him but did not understand a word he said for a long time.

ExceptingIvan Fedorovitch (the general), who had not as yet returned from town, the whole family conclave was present. Prince S. was there; he intended to go out to hear the music very soon.

The conversation now going on had commenced before the prince's arrival and went on as before, Evgenie bearing the brunt of it.

Colia arrived shortly afterwards, and joined the circle. "So he is received as usual, after all," thought the prince.

The Epanchins' country house was a charming building, built after the model of a Swiss cottage, and planted round with a profusion of flowers and shrubs. It was surrounded on all sides by a flower garden, and the family sat, as a rule, on the open balcony, as at the prince's house.

The subject being discussed, did not appear to be at all popular with the assembled guests, who would have been delighted to change it; but Evgenie would not stop holding forth, and the prince's arrival seemed to have spurred him on to further oratorical effort.

Lizabetha Prokofievna frowned, but had not as yet grasped the subject; she was inclined to frown at anything, just now; and Aglaya sat apart, almost in the corner, listening in stubborn silence.

"Excuse me," continued Evgenie Pavlovitch, "I don't say a word against liberalism. Liberalism is not a sin, it is a necessary part of a great whole, which whole would collapse and come to pieces without it. Liberalism has just as much right to exist as has the most morbid conservatism; but I am attacking *Russian* liberalism; and I attack it for the simple reason that a Russian liberal is *not* a Russian liberal, he is a non-Russian liberal. Give me a real Russian liberal, and I'll kiss him before you all, with pleasure."

"If *he* cared to kiss *you*, that is," said Alexandra, whose cheeks were blushing red with irritation.

"Look at that, now," thought the mother to herself, "she does nothing but sleep and eat for a year at a time, and then suddenly flies out at one, fit to knock one down."

The prince observed that Alexandra appeared to be angry with Evgenie, because he spoke on a serious subject, in a

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frivolous manner, pretending to be in earnest, but with an under-current of irony.

"I was saying just now, before you came in, prince, that there has been nothing national up to now, about our liberalism, and nothing the liberals do, or have done, is in the least degree national."

"How, nothing that has been done in Russia?" asked Prince S.

"Not in the least, it is not national; it may be Russian, but it is not national; our liberals are not Russian, nor are our conservatives, and you may be sure that the nation does not recognize anything that has been done by the landed gentry, or by the seminarists or what is to be done either."

"Come, that's good. How can you argue to such a paradox? if you are serious that is. I cannot allow such a statement about the landed proprietors to pass unchallenged; why, you are a landed proprietor yourself," cried Prince S. hotly.

"I suppose you'll say there is nothing national about our literature either?" said Alexandra.

"Well, I am not a great authority on literary questions, but I certainly do hold that Russian literature is *not* Russian, except perhaps Lomonosoff, Pouschkin and Gogol."

"In the first place, that is a considerable admission, and in the second place, *one* of the above was a peasant, and the other two were both landed proprietors."

"Quite so, but you must not be in such a hurry to deduce from that fact; for since it has been the part of these three men, and only these three, to say something in Russian absolutely *their own*, not common to any other human being, so by this very fact, these three men become, and are really national.

"If any Russian shall have done or said anything really and absolutely original, he is to be called national from that moment, though he may not be able to talk the Russian language decently, still he is a national Russian. I consider that an axiom. But we were not speaking of literature; we began by discussing the socialists, and the conversation led on from them. Very well then, I insist that there does not exist one single Russian socialist; there does not, and there has never existed such a one, because all socialists are derived from the two classes, the landed proprietors, and the seminarists. All our eminent socialists are merely old liberals of the class of landed proprietors, men who were liberals in the days of serfdom.

"Why do you laugh? Give me their books, give me their

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studies, their memoirs, and though I am not a literary critic, yet I will prove as clear as day that every chapter and every word of their memoirs and writings has been the work of a former landed proprietor under the serf laws. You'll find that all their raptures, all their generous transports are proprietary, all their woes and their tears, proprietary; all proprietary or seminarist. You are laughing again, and you, prince, are smiling too, don't you agree with me?"

It was true enough that everybody was laughing, the prince among them.

"I cannot tell you on the instant whether I agree with you or not," said the latter, suddenly stopping his laughter, and trembling like a schoolboy caught at mischief. "But, I assure you, that I am listening to you with extreme gratification in any case."

So saying, he almost panted with agitation, and a cold sweat stood upon his forehead; these were his first words since he had entered the house; he tried to lift his eyes, and look around, but dared not; Evgenie Pavlovitch noticed his confusion, and smiled.

"I'll just tell you one fact, ladies and gentlemen," continued the latter, in the same tone as before, that is, with apparent seriousness, and even exaltation of manner, but with a suggestion of "chaff" behind every word he said, as though he were laughing in his sleeve at his own nonsense—"a fact, the discovery of which, I believe, I may claim to have made by myself alone; at all events, no other has ever said or written a word about it; and in this fact is expressed the whole essence of Russian liberalism of the sort which I am now considering.

"In the first place, what is liberalism, speaking generally, but an attack (whether mistaken or reasonable, is quite another question) upon the existing order of things. Is this so? Yes. Very well. Then my 'fact' consists in this, that *Russian* liberalism is not an attack upon the existing order of things, but an attack upon the very essence of things themselves, indeed, *on* the things themselves; not an attack on the order of things, on Russian order, but on Russia itself.

"My Russian liberal goes so far as to reject Russia herself, that is, he hates and strikes his own mother. Every misfortune and mishap of the mother country fills him with mirth, and even with joy and ecstacy.

"He hates the national customs, Russian history, and so on. If he has a justification it is in the fact that he does not know what he is doing, and believes that his hatred for Russia is

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the grandest and most profitable ground of liberalism. (You will often find a liberal here who is applauded and esteemed by the others his fellows, but who is in reality the dreariest, blindest, dullest of conservatives, and is not aware of the fact.) This hatred for Russia has been mistaken by some of our 'Russian liberals' for sincere love for the fatherland, and they boast that they see better than their neighbours what real love for their fatherland should consist in. But of late they have grown more candid and are ashamed of the expression 'love of country,' and have annihilated and talked down the very spirit of the words as something injurious and petty and undignified.

"This fact of mine is the truth, and I hold by it; but at the same time it is a phenomenon which has not been repeated at any other time or place; and therefore, though I hold to it as a fact, and though I am right in admitting it as a fact, candidly and publicly, yet I recognise that it is an accidental state of things and may likely enough pass away.

"There can be no such thing as a liberal who really hates his country; and how is this fact to be best seen and proved? by my original statement that a Russian liberal is *not* a Russian liberal—that's the only explanation that I can see."

"I prefer to understand all that you have said as a joke from beginning to end," said Prince S., seriously.

"I have not seen all kinds of liberals, and cannot, therefore, set myself up as a judge in the matter," said Alexandra, "but I have heard all you have said with disgust; you have taken some accidental case and twisted it into a universal law, which is a calumniation of the principle."

"Accidental case!" said Evgenie Pavlovitch, "do *you* consider it an accidental case, prince?"

"I must also admit," said the prince, "that I have not seen much, or been very far into the question; but I cannot help thinking that you are more or less right, and that Russian liberalism—that phase of it which you are considering, at least, — really is sometimes inclined to hate Russia itself, and not only its existing order of things in general. Of course this is only *partially* the truth; you cannot lay down the law for all—"

The prince blushed and drew up, without finishing what he meant to say.

In spite of his shyness and agitation, caused by other circumstances on this occasion, he could not help being greatly interested in the conversation.

A special characteristic of the prince was the naïveness with which he always listened to arguments which interested

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him, and with which he answered any questions put to him on the subject at issue. In the very expression of his face and pose of his body, this naïve faith was unmistakably evident, this disbelief in the insincerity of others, and unsuspecting disregard of irony or humour in their words.

But though Evgenie Pavlovitch had up to now put his questions to the prince with no other purpose but to enjoy the joke of his simple-minded seriousness, yet now, at this last answer, he was surprised into some seriousness himself and looked gravely at the prince as though he had not expected that sort of answer at all.

"Why, what a strange sort of fellow you are, prince!" he ejaculated; "you didn't answer me seriously surely, did you?"

"Did not you ask me the question seriously?" inquired the prince, in amazement.

Everybody laughed.

"Oh, trust *him* for that!" said Adelaida. "Evgenie Pavlovitch turns everything and everybody he can lay hold of into ridicule. You should hear the things he says sometimes, apparently in perfect seriousness."

"In my opinion the conversation has been a painful one throughout, and we ought never to have embarked upon it," said Alexandra. "We were all going out for a walk—"

"Come along then," said Evgenie; "it's a glorious evening; but, to prove that this time I was speaking absolutely seriously, and especially to prove this to the prince (for you, prince, have interested me exceedingly, and I swear to you that I am not quite such a blockhead as I like to appear sometimes, although I am rather an ass, I admit), and—well, ladies and gentlemen, will you allow me to put just one more question to the prince, out of pure curiosity—and it shall be the last. This question came into my mind a couple of hours since (you see, prince, I do think seriously at times), and I made my own decision upon it; now I wish to hear what the prince will say to it.

"We have just used the expression 'accidental case;' this is a common enough phrase, we often hear it about us. Well, not long since every one was talking and reading about that terrible murder of six people on the part of a—young fellow, and of the extraordinary speech of the counsel for the defence, when the latter learned gentleman observed that in the poverty-stricken condition of the criminal it must have come *naturally* into his head to kill these six unfortunates. I do not quote his words, but that is the sense of them, or something very like it. Now, in my opinion the barrister who put forth this extraordin-

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ary idea as to nature, was probably absolutely convinced that he was stating the most liberal, the most humane, the most enlightened view of the case that could possibly be brought forward in these days. Now, was this distortion of the understanding and convictions, this capacity for a perverted way of viewing things, a special or accidental case, or is such a general rule?"

Every one laughed at this sally.

"A special case—accidental of course!" cried Alexandra and Adelaida, laughing.

"Let me remind you once more, Evgenie," said Prince S., "that your joke is getting a little threadbare."

"What do *you* think about it, prince?" asked Evgenie, taking no notice of the last remark, and observing the prince's (Lef Nicolaievitch) serious eyes fixed upon his face. "What do *you* think—was it a special or an unusual case—the rule or an exception? I confess I put the question especially for you."

"No, I don't think it was a special case," said the prince, quietly, but firmly.

"My dear sir!" cried Prince S., with some annoyance, "don't you see that he is chaffing you? he is simply laughing at you, and wants to make a thorough fool of you; can't you see *that?*"

"I thought Evgenie Pavlovitch was talking seriously," said the prince, blushing and dropping his eyes.

"My dear prince," continued Prince S., "remember what you and I were saying two or three months ago; we spoke of the fact that in our new opened Law Courts one could already lay one's finger upon so many talented and remarkable young barristers; how pleased you were with the state of things as we found it, and how glad I was to observe your delight; we both said it was a matter to be proud of; but this clumsy defence that Evgenie mentions, this strange argument *can*, of course, only be an accidental case—one idea in a thousand!"

The prince reflected a little, but very soon he replied, with absolute conviction in his tone, though he still spoke somewhat shyly and timidly:

"I only wished to say that 'this distortion of understanding and convictions,' as Evgenie Pavlovitch expressed it, is met with very often, and is far more the general rule than the exception, unfortunately for Russia. So much so, that if this distortion were *not* the general rule, perhaps these dreadful crimes would be less frequent."

"Dreadful crimes? But I can assure you that crimes just as dreadful, and probably more horrible, have occurred before our

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times, and at all times, and not only here in Russia, but everywhere else as well; and in my opinion it is not at all likely that such murders will cease to occur for a very long time to come. The only difference is that in former times there was less publicity, while now everyone talks and writes freely about such things—which fact gives the impression that such crimes have only now sprung into existence. That is where your mistake lies,—an extremely natural mistake, I assure you, my dear fellow!" said Prince S.

"I know myself that there were just as many, and just as terrible crimes before our times. Not long since I visited a convict prison and made acquaintance with some of the criminals. There were some even more dreadful criminals than this one we have been speaking of—men who have murdered their fellow creatures, and feel no remorse whatever. But what I specially noticed about it all was this, that the very most hopeless and remorseless murderer—however deeply-rooted a criminal he may be in heart, and mind, and all—still *knows that he is a criminal;* that is, he is conscious that he has acted wickedly, though he may feel no remorse whatever. And they are all like this. Those of whom Evgenie Pavlovitch has spoken, do not admit that they are criminals at all; they think they had a right to do what they did, and that they were even doing a good deed perhaps. I consider there is the greatest difference between the two cases. And recollect—it was the one of the *youth* of the nation—the particular age which is most helplessly susceptible to the distortion of ideas!"

Prince S. was now no longer smiling; he gazed at the prince in bewilderment.

Alexandra, who had seemed to wish to put in her word when the prince began, now sat silent, as though some sudden thought had caused her to change her mind about speaking.

Evgenie Pavlovitch gazed at the prince in real surprise, and this time his expression of face had no irony in it whatever.

"What are you looking so surprised about, my friend?" asked Mrs. Epanchin, suddenly. "Did you suppose he was stupider than yourself, and was incapable of forming his own opinions, or what?"

"No!—Oh no!—not at all!" said Evgenie, "but—how is it, prince, that you—(excuse the question, will you?)—if you are capable of observing and seeing things as you evidently do, how is it that you saw nothing distorted or perverted in that claim upon your property, which I hear you acknowledged a day or two

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since; and which, I am told, was full of arguments founded upon the most distorted views of right and wrong."

"Well, I'll tell you what, my friend," cried Mrs. Epanchin, of a sudden, "here are we all sitting here and imagining we are very clever, and perhaps laughing at the prince, some of us, and meanwhile he has received a letter this very day in which that same claimant renounces his claim, acknowledges the justice of the prince's arguments, and refuses to have anything more to do with his partners in the business. There! *we* don't often get that sort of letter; and yet we are not ashamed to walk with our noses in the air before him."

"Hippolyte has come down here to stay," said Colia, suddenly.

"What! has he arrived?" said the prince, starting up.

"Yes, I brought him down from town just after you had left the house."

"There now! it's just like him," cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, boiling over once more, and entirely oblivious of the fact that she had just taken the prince's part. "I dare swear that you went up to town yesterday on purpose to get the little wretch to do you the great honour of coming to stay at your house. You did go up to town, you know you did—you said so yourself! Now then, did you, or did you not, go down on your knees and beg him to come, confess."

"No, he didn't, for I saw it all myself," said Colia; "on the contrary, Hippolyte kissed his hand twice and thanked him; and all the prince said was that he thought Hippolyte might feel a bit better here in the country!"

"Don't, Colia,—what is the use of saying all that!" cried the prince, rising and taking his hat.

"Where are you going to now?" cried Mrs. Epanchin.

"Never mind about him now, prince," said Colia; "he is all right and taking a nap after the journey; he is very happy to be here; but I think perhaps it would be better if you let him alone for to-day,—he is very sensitive now that he is so ill—and he might be embarrassed if you show him too much attention at first. He is decidedly better to-day, and says he has not felt so well for the last six months, and has coughed much less to-day, too."

The prince observed that Aglaya came out of the corner and approached nearer the table at this point.

He did not dare look at her, but he was conscious, to the very tips of his fingers, that she was gazing at him at this moment, and perhaps gazing crossly; and that she had probably flushed up with a look of fiery indignation in her black eyes.

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"It seems to me, Mr. Colia, that you were very foolish to bring your young friend down—if he is the same consumptive boy who wept on one occasion, so profusely, and invited us all to his own funeral?" remarked Evgenie Pavlovitch. "He talked so eloquently about the blank wall outside his bedroom window, that I'm sure he will never support life here without it."

"I think so too," said Mrs. Epanchin; "he will quarrel with you, and be off before the day's out!" and Mrs. General drew her workbox towards her with an air of dignity, quite oblivious of the fact that the family was about to start for a walk in the park.

"Yes, I remember he boasted about the blank wall in an extraordinary way," continued Evgenie, "and I feel that without that blank wall he will never be able to die eloquently; and he does so long to die eloquently!"

"Oh, you must forgive him the blank wall," said the prince, quietly; "he has come down to see a few trees now, poor fellow."

"Oh, *I* forgive him with all my heart; you may tell him so if you like," laughed Evgenie.

"I don't think you approach this matter quite as it ought to be met," said the prince, quietly, and without removing his eyes from one spot on the carpet; "I think it is more a case of *his* forgiving you."

"Forgiving me! why so? What have I done to need his forgiveness?"

"If you don't understand, then—but of course, you do understand— He wished— I know what he said on the occasion you mean. He wished to bless you all round and to have your blessing, as it were—before he died—poor boy; that's all."

"My dear prince," began Prince S., hurriedly, exchanging glances with two or three of those present, "you will not easily find Heaven in this earth, and yet you seem to expect to discover it here. Heaven is a difficult thing to get hold of anywhere, prince; far more difficult than appears to that sterling good heart of yours. Better stop this conversation, or we shall all be growing quite disturbed in our minds. We can't do much good by going on, and—"

"Let's all go and hear the band, then," said Lizabetha Prokofievna, rising angrily from her place.

The rest of the company followed her example.

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II.

THE prince suddenly approached Evgenie Pavlovitch.

"Evgenie Pavlovitch," he said, with strange excitement and seizing the latter's hand in his own, "be assured that I esteem you as a generous and high-minded man, in spite of everything, be assured of that."

Evgenie Pavlovitch fell back a step in astonishment. For one moment it was all he could do to restrain himself from bursting out laughing; but looking closer he observed that the prince did not seem to be quite himself; at all events, he was in a very curious state.

"I wouldn't mind betting, prince," he cried, "that you did not in the least mean to say *that*, and very likely you meant to address someone else altogether. What is it? are you feeling unwell or anything?"

"Very likely, extremely likely, and you must be a very close observer to detect the fact—very likely I did *not* intend to come up to you at all."

So saying he smiled strangely; but suddenly and excitedly, he began again:

"Don't remind me of what I have done or said. Don't. I am very much ashamed of myself, I—"

"Why, what have you done? I don't understand you."

"I see you are ashamed of me, Evgenie Pavlovitch; you are blushing for me; that's a sign of a good heart. Don't be afraid; I shall go away directly."

"What's the matter with him? do his fits begin like that?" said Lizabetha Prokofievna, in a high state of alarm, addressing Colia.

"No, no, Lizabetha Prokofievna, take no notice of me; I am not going to have a fit. I will go away directly; but I know I am a wretched *lusus Naturæ*. I was twenty-four years an invalid, you see—the first twenty-four years of my life—so take all I do and say as the sayings and actions of an invalid. I'm going away directly, I really am—don't be afraid. I am not blushing, for I don't think I need blush about it, need I? but I see that I am not wanted in society—society is better without me. It's not vanity on my heart, or selfishness, I assure you. I have thought over it all these last three days and I have made up my mind that I ought to unbosom myself candidly before you at the first opportunity. There are certain

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things, certain exalted ideas which I must not so much as approach as Prince S. has just reminded me, or I shall make you all laugh. I have no sense of proportion, I know; no appreciation of the proper; my words do not express my ideas fairly—they are a humiliation and abasement of the ideas, and therefore, I have no right—and I am— Still, I believe I am beloved in this kind household, and esteemed far more than I deserve. I can't help knowing that after twenty years of illness there must be something left behind; so that it is impossible for people to refrain from laughing at me sometimes, don't you think so?"

He seemed to pause for a reply, for some verdict, as it were, and looked humbly around him.

All present stood rooted to the earth with amazement at this unexpected and apparently uncalled for sally; but the poor prince's painful and rambling effort gave rise to a strange episode.

"Why do you say all this here?" cried Aglaya, suddenly, "why do you talk like this to them, *them*?"

She appeared to be in the last stage of wrath and irritation; her eyes flashed. The prince stood dumbly and blindly before her, and suddenly paled all over.

"There is not one of them all who is worthy of these words of yours," continued Aglaya, "not one of them is worth your little finger, not one of them has heart or head to compare with yours. You are more honest than all, and better, nobler, kinder, wiser than all. There are some here who are unworthy to bend and pick up the handkerchief you have just dropped. Why do you humiliate yourself like this, and place yourself lower than all these people. Why do you debase yourself and your worth before them; why have you no pride?"

"My goodness! who would ever have believed this?" cried Mrs. Epanchin, wringing her hands.

"Hurrah for the poor knight!" cried Colia.

"Be quiet. How dare they laugh at me in your house?" said Aglaya, turning sharply at her mother in that hysterical condition of mind when one is ready to ride recklessly over every obstacle and plunge blindly through proprieties and accepted forms. "Why does everyone, everyone worry and torment me? Why have they all been bullying me these three days about you, prince? I will not marry you—never, and under no circumstances; know that once and for all; as if anyone could marry a comical creature like yourself. Just look in the glass and see what you look like this very moment. Why,

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why do they torment me and say I am going to marry you? You must know it; you are in the plot with them."

"No one ever tormented her on the subject," murmured Adelaida, aghast.

"No one ever thought of such a thing; there has never been a word said about it!" cried Alexandra.

"Who has been annoying her? who has been tormenting the child? Who could have said such a thing to her? Is she raving or not?" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, trembling with rage, to the public in general.

"Every one of them have been saying it—every one of them—all these three days; and I will never, never marry him!"

So saying, Aglaya burst into bitter tears, and, covering her face with her hands, sunk back into a chair.

"But he has never even propo—"

"I have never even asked you to marry me, Aglaya Ivanovna!" said the prince, of a sudden.

"*What?*" cried Mrs. Epanchin, raising her hands in horror, "*what's* that?"

She could not believe her ears.

"I meant to say—I only meant to say," said the prince, bungling, "I merely meant to explain to Aglaya Ivanovna—to have the honour to explain, as it were—that I had no intention—never had—to ask the honour of her hand. I assure you I am not guilty, Aglaya Ivanovna, I am not, indeed. I never did wish to—I never thought of it at all—and never shall—you'll see it yourself—you may be quite assured of it. Some wicked person has been maligning me to you; but you may rest assured that it's all right."

So saying, the prince approached Aglaya.

She took the handkerchief from over her face, glanced keenly at his eyes, and at his whole frightened figure, took in what he had said, and burst out laughing in his face—such a merry, unrestrained laugh, it sounded so hearty and amused, that Adelaida could bear it no longer. She, too, glanced at the prince, then rushed at her sister, threw her arms round Aglaya's neck, and burst into as merry a fit of laughter as Aglaya's own, and the pair laughed on together like a couple of school-girls. Hearing and seeing this, the prince smiled happily, and in accents of relief and joy, he exclaimed: "Well, thank God—thank God!"

Alexandra now joined the laughter, and it really looked as though the three sisters were going to laugh on forever.

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"Insane girls," muttered Lizabetha Prokofievna, "either they frighten one out of one's wits, or else—"

But Prince S. was laughing now, too; so was Evgenie Pavlovitch, so was Colia, and so was the prince himself, who caught the infection as he looked round radiantly on the others.

"Come along, let's go out for a walk!" cried Adelaida. We'll all go together, and the prince must absolutely go with us. You needn't go away, you dear good fellow. *Isn't* he a dear good fellow, Aglaya—isn't he, mother? I must really give him a kiss for—for his explanation to Aglaya just now. Mother, dear, I may kiss him, mayn't I? Aglaya, may I kiss *your* prince?" cried this young rogue of a girl, and sure enough she skipped up to the prince and kissed his forehead.

The prince seized her hands, and pressed them so hard that Adelaida nearly cried out; he then gazed with delighted face into her eyes, and raising her right hand to his lips with enthusiasm, kissed it three times, and let it go.

"Come along," said Aglaya. "Prince, you must walk with me. May he, mother?—this young husband, who won't have me? You said you would *never* have me, didn't you, prince? No—no, not like that; *that's* not the way to give your arm. Don't you know how to give your arm to a lady yet? There—so; now, come along, you and I will lead the way. Would you like to lead the way with me alone, *tête-à-tête*?"

She went on talking and chatting without a pause, with occasional little bursts of laughter between.

"Thank God—thank God!" said Lizabetha Prokofievna to herself, without quite knowing why she felt so relieved and happy.

"What extraordinary people they are," thought Prince S., for perhaps the hundredth time since he had entered into intimate relations with the family; but—he liked these "extraordinary people," all the same. As for Prince Lef Nicolaievitch himself, Prince S. did not seem quite to like him, somehow. He was decidedly pre-occupied and a little disturbed as they all started off for this eventful walk.

Evgenie Pavlovitch seemed to be in a grand humour; he made Adelaida and Alexandra laugh all the way to the Vauxhall; but they both laughed at his jokes so very readily and promptly that the worthy Evgenie began at last to suspect that they were not listening to him at all.

At this idea, he burst out laughing all at once, and this time in quite unaffected mirth, for the idea amused him.

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The sisters, who also appeared to be in gloriously good spirits, never tired of glancing at Aglaya and the prince, who were walking in front; it was evident that their younger sister was a thorough puzzle to them both.

Prince S. tried hard to get up a conversation with Mrs. Epanchin upon outside subjects, probably with the good intention of distracting and amusing her; but he bored her dreadfully. She was absent to a degree, and answered at cross purposes, and sometimes not at all.

But the puzzle and mystery of Aglaya was not yet over for the evening; the last exhibition fell to the lot of the prince alone—he had the benefit of it all to himself.

Whey they had proceeded some hundred paces or so from the house, Aglaya said to her obstinately silent cavalier in a quick half-whisper:

"Look to the right!"

The prince glanced in the direction indicated.

"Look closer. Do you see that bench, in the park there, just by those three big trees—that green bench?"

The prince replied that he saw the bench.

"Do you like the position of it? Sometimes of a morning early, at seven o'clock, when all the rest are still asleep, I come out and sit here alone."

The prince muttered that the spot was a lovely one.

"Now, go away, I don't wish to have your arm any longer; or perhaps, better, continue to give me your arm, and walk along beside me, but don't speak a word to me; I wish to think by myself."

The warning was certainly unnecessary; for the prince would not have said a word all the rest of the time whether forbidden to speak or not.

His heart beat loud and painfully when Aglaya spoke of the bench; could she—but no! he banished the thought, he would not imagine her capable of the slightest unmaidenliness.

At Pavlofsk, on week days, the public is, as every one knows, or at least as everyone affirms, more select than it is on Sundays and Saturdays; on which latter days the *plebs* come down from town to walk about and enjoy the park.

The ladies dress elegantly, on these days, but not in their finest feathers, and it is the fashion to gather round the band. The orchestra, which is probably far the best of our suburban pleasure-garden bands, plays the newest pieces. The behaviour of the week-day public is most correct and proper, in spite of a

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sort of family-party appearance of the usual frequenters, and of the intimacy existing between most of them.

Acquaintances meet here to have a look at each other. Many come for nothing but this purpose; but there are others who come for the sake of the music. It is very seldom that anything happens to break the harmony of the proceedings, though, of course, accidents *will* happen everywhere.

On this particular evening the weather was lovely, and there were a large number of people present. All the places anywhere near the orchestra were occupied.

Our friends took chairs near the side exit from the Vauxhall. The crowd and the music and all cheered Mrs. Epanchin a little, and amused the girls; they bowed and shook hands with some of their friends and nodded at a distance to others; they examined the ladies' dresses, noticed strangenesses and comicalities among the people about, and laughed and talked among themselves. Evgenie Pavlovitch, too, found plenty of friends to bow to. Several people noticed Aglaya and the prince, who were still together.

Before very long two or three young fellows had come up to the mamma and pretty daughters, and one or two remained to talk; all of these young men appeared to be on intimate terms with Evgenie Pavlovitch. Among these latter was one young officer, a remarkably handsome fellow—very good-natured and a great chatterbox. He tried to get up a conversation with Aglaya, and did his very best to secure her attention. Aglaya behaved very graciously to him, and chatted and laughed merrily.

Evgenie Pavlovitch begged the prince's leave to introduce their friend to him. The prince hardly realised what was wanted of him, but the introduction came off all the same; the men bowed and shook hands.

Evgenie Pavlovitch's friend asked the prince some question, but the latter did not reply, or if he did, he muttered something so strangely indistinct that there was nothing to be made of it. The officer stared intently at him, then glanced at Evgenie, divined why the latter had introduced him, and gave his undivided attention to Aglaya again. Only Evgenie Pavlovitch observed that Aglaya blushed up for a moment during this little performance.

The prince did not notice that others were talking and making themselves agreeable to Aglaya; in fact, at moments, he almost forgot that he was sitting by her himself. At other moments he felt a longing to go away somewhere and be alone

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to disappear and think out his thoughts by himself, and to feel that no one else knew where he was.

Or if that were impossible he would like to be alone at home, on the balcony—without either Lebedeff or his children, or anyone else about him, to bother him, and to lie there and think—a day and night and another day again! He thought of the mountains—and especially of a certain spot among the mountains which he used to frequent, in Switzerland—whence he would look down among the distant valleys and fields and see the waterfall, far off, like a little silver thread, and the old ruined castle in the distance. Oh! how he longed to be there now—alone with his thoughts—to think of one thing—all his life—one thing! and a thousand years should not be too much time to give to the subject! And let everyone here forget him—forget him utterly! How much better it would have been if they had never known him—if all this could but prove to be a dream.

Now and then he took to looking at Aglaya, and stared at her face for five minutes at a time without taking his eyes off; but his expression was very strange; he would gaze at her as though she were an object a couple of miles distant, or as though he were looking at her portrait and not at herself at all.

"Why do you look at me like that, prince?" she asked suddenly, breaking off her merry conversation and laughter with those about her. "I'm afraid of you! you look as though you were just going to put out your hand and pinch my face! Doesn't he, Evgenie Pavlovitch—doesn't he look like that?"

The prince seemed to listen, surprised that he should have been addressed at all; he then reflected a moment, but did not seem to take in what had been said to him; at all events, he did not answer; but observing that both she and the others about her had all begun to laugh, he too opened his mouth and did the same himself.

The laugh became general and hearty; the young officer, who seemed a particularly lively sort of person, simply shook with laughter.

Agalya suddenly whispered angrily to herself the word—"Idiot!"

"My goodness—surely she is not in love with such a—surely she isn't quite mad!" groaned Mrs. Epanchin, under her breath.

"It's all a joke, mamma; it's just a joke like the 'poor knight'—nothing more whatever, I assure you! She is chaffing him—making a fool of him, after her own private fashion,

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that's all! But she carries it just a little too far—she is a regular little actress. How she frightened us all just now—didn't she?—and all for a 'lark'!"

"Well, it's lucky she has happened upon an idiot, then, that's all I can say!" whispered Lizabetha Prokofievna, who was somewhat comforted, however, by her daughter's last remark.

The prince had heard himself referred to as "idiot," and had shuddered at the moment; but his shudder, it so happened, was not caused by the word being applied to him. The fact was that in the crowd, not far from where he was sitting, there had suddenly flashed across his vision a pale familiar face, with curly black hair, and a well-known smile and expression—had flashed across his vision for a moment, and disappeared again. Very likely he had merely imagined it!—but there remained to him, as the impression left by his vision, the crooked smile, the two eyes, and the smart green tie which was worn by the gentleman who had appeared for an instant and so speedily disappeared again. Whether the man had disappeared among the crowd, or whether he had turned towards the Vauxhall, the prince could not say.

But a moment or two afterwards he began to glance keenly and quickly about him. That first vision might only too likely be the fore-runner of a second; it was almost certain to be so. Surely he had not forgotten the possibility of such a meeting when he came to the Vauxhall? True enough, he had not observed where he was coming to when he set out with Aglaya; he had not been in a condition to remark anything at all.

Had he been more careful to observe his companion, he would have seen that for the last quarter of an hour Aglaya had occasionally been glancing around in apparent anxiety, as though she expected to see some one, or something particular, among the crowds of people.

Now, at the moment when his own anxiety became so marked, her excitement also increased visibly, and when he gazed into the crowd, she had done the same.

The reason for their anxiety soon became apparent. From that very side entrance to the Vauxhall, near which the prince and all the Epanchin lot were seated, there suddenly appeared quite a large knot of persons, at least ten people, coming along.

Heading this little band there walked three ladies, two of whom were absolutely lovely women; and there was nothing surprising in the fact that they should have had a somewhat large troop of admirers following in their wake.

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But there was something in the appearance of both ladies and admirers which was special, something quite different to that of the rest of the public assembled around the orchestra.

Nearly every one of these latter observed the little band advancing, and one and all pretended not to see or notice them, all except a few young fellows who exchanged glances and grinned, saying something to one another in a whisper.

It was impossible to avoid noticing them, however, in reality, for they made their presence only too conspicuous by laughing and talking loud. It was to be supposed that some of them were more than half drunk, although they were well enough dressed, some of them even particularly well. There were one or two, however, who were very strange-looking creatures, with flushed faces and extraordinary-looking clothes; some were military men; not all were quite young; there were one or two middle-aged gentlemen of decidedly disagreeable appearance, men who are avoided in society like the plague, decked out in large gold studs and rings and magnificently "got up," generally.

Among our suburban resorts there are some which enjoy a specially high reputation for aristocratic and fashionable prominence; but the very most careful individual is not absolutely exempted from the danger of a brick falling suddenly upon his head from his neighbour's house.

Such a sudden brick was about to descend upon the elegant and aristocratic public now assembled to hear the music.

In order to pass from the Vauxhall to the raised site where the orchestra performs, the visitor has to mount two or three steps. Just at these steps the little band paused, as though it feared to proceed further; but very quickly one of the three ladies, who formed its apex, climbed the steps and entered the charmed circle, followed by two members of her suite.

One of these was a middle-aged man of very respectable appearance, but with the stamp of parvenu upon him, a man whom nobody knew, and who evidently knew nobody. The other follower was a younger and far less respectable-looking man.

No one else followed the eccentric-looking lady; but as she stepped into the space she did not even look behind her, as though it were absolutely the same to her whether anyone were following or not. She laughed and talked loudly, however, just as before. She was dressed with great taste and splendour, but with rather more magnificence than was needed for the place and occasion, perhaps.

She passed across the space, past the orchestra, and towards

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a spot where somebody's open carriage was waiting, near the road.

The prince had not seen her for more than three months. All these days since his arrival from Petersburg he had intended to pay her a visit, but some mysterious presentiment had restrained him.

At all events, he could not picture to himself the precise nature of the inevitable impression which his first meeting with her would have upon him, though he had often tried to imagine it, with fear and trembling. One fact was quite certain, and that was that the meeting would be painful in the extreme.

Several times during the last six months he had recalled the effect which the first sight of this face had wrought upon him, when he only saw its portrait likeness; he recollected well that even that portrait face had left but too painful an impression upon him.

That month in the country when he had seen this woman nearly every day had affected him so deeply that he could not now look back upon that not very distant time without a shock of terrible feeling. In the very look of the girl there was something which tortured and tormented him; in conversation with Rogojin the prince had attributed this sensation to pity—boundless, immeasurable *pity*, and this was the unmixed truth. The sight of the portrait face alone had filled his heart full with the agony of real sympathy; and this feeling of sympathy, nay, actual *suffering*, for the poor creature had never left his heart for a moment since that hour, and was still in full force. Oh, yes, and far, far more powerful than ever.

But the prince was not satisfied with what he had said to Rogojin; only at this moment, when she now suddenly made her appearance before him, as described above, did he realise to the full the exact emotion which she called up in him, and which he had not, he thought, described correctly to Rogojin.

And, indeed, there were no words in which he could have expressed his horror, yes, *horror*, for her sake. Only at this moment did his feelings convey to him the right, the real understanding of his emotion on her account, for he now realised fully, by his own private observation and knowledge of her, that this poor girl was mad—mad!

If he, loving this woman above everything in the world, or at least having a foretaste of the possibility of such love for her, if he had suddenly beheld her on a chain, behind bars and beneath the lash of a keeper, the impression would have been something like what the poor prince now felt stirring in his heart.

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"What's the matter?" asked Aglaya, in a whisper, and with affected innocence, looking into his eyes and giving his sleeve a little tug.

He turned his head towards her and gazed at her, glanced at her black and (for some reason which he could not realise) flashing eyes, tried to smile, and, then, apparently forgetting her and all about her in an instant, turned his face to the right once more, and continued to watch the dreadful apparition before him.

Nastasia Philipovna was at this moment passing the young ladies' chairs.

Evgenie Pavlovitch continued some apparently extremely funny and interesting anecdote to Alexandra, speaking quickly and with much animation. The prince remembered that at this moment Aglaya remarked in a half whisper:

"*What* a —"

She did not finish her indefinite sentence; she restrained herself in a moment; but it was enough.

Nastasia Philipovna, who up to now had been walking along as though she had not noticed the Epanchin party, suddenly turned her head in their direction, as though she had just observed Evgenie Pavlovitch sitting there for the first time.

"Why, I declare, here he is!" she cried, stopping suddenly. "The man one can't find with all one's messengers and people, sent about the place, to be sitting just under one's nose, exactly where one never thought of looking. I thought you were sure to be at your uncle's by this time."

Evgenie Pavlovitch flushed up and looked angrily at Nastasia Philipovna, then turned his back on her again.

"What! don't you know about it yet? He doesn't know—imagine that! Why, he's shot himself. Your uncle shot himself this very morning. I was told at two this afternoon. Half the town must know it by now. They say there are three hundred and fifty thousand roubles, state money, missing, some say five hundred thousand. And I was under the impression that he would leave you some money instead of this flare up. He's whistled it all away. A most depraved old gentleman, really! Well, ta, ta!—*bonne chance!* Surely you intend to be off there, don't you? Ha, ha! You've retired from the army in good time, I see. Plain clothes! Well done, sly rogue! Nonsense! I see—you knew it all before—I daresay you knew all about it yesterday—"

Although the impudence of this attack, this publication of intimacy, as it were, was doubtless premeditated, and had its

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own special object, yet Evgenie Pavlovitch at first seemed to intend to make no show of observing either his tormentor or her words. But Nastasia's communication struck him with the force of a thunderclap. On hearing of his uncle's death, he suddenly grew as pale as a handkerchief and turned towards his informant.

At this moment, Lizabetha Prokofievna rose swiftly from her seat, beckoned up her companions, and left the place almost at a run.

Only the prince stopped behind for a moment, as though in indecision; and Evgenie Pavlovitch lingered too, for he had not collected his scattered wits. But the Epanchins had not had time to get more than twenty paces away when a scandalous episode occurred. The young officer, Evgenie Pavlovitch's great friend, who had been conversing excitedly with Aglaya, in a great state of indignation, said aloud:

"She ought to be whipped—that's the only way to deal with creatures like that—she ought to be whipped!"

This gentleman was a confidant of Evgenie's, and had doubtless heard of the carriage episode.

Nastasia turned to him in a moment. Her eyes flashed; she rushed up to a young man standing near—a young fellow whom she did not know in the least, but who happened to have in his hand a little thin cane. Seizing this from him, she brought it with all her force across the face of her slanderer.

All this occurred, of course, in one instant of time.

The young officer, forgetting himself, sprang towards her—Nastasia's followers were not by her at the moment (the elderly gentleman having disappeared altogether, and the younger man simply standing aside and roaring with laughter).

In another moment, of course, the police would have been on the spot; but pending their arrival it would have gone hard with Nastasia Philipovna had not unexpected aid appeared.

The prince, who was but a couple of steps away, had time to spring forward and hold the officer's hand from behind.

The officer, tearing his hand from the prince's grasp, pushed the latter so violently backwards by the chest that he staggered a few steps and then subsided into a chair.

But there were other defenders for Nastasia on the spot by this time. One of Rogojin's troop, a young gentleman, generally known as the "boxer," now confronted the enraged officer.

"Keller is my name, sir; lieutenant on half-pay," he said, very loud; "if you would like a little set-to, captain—saving the ladies' presence—I'm your man!"

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It looked rather as though an English prize fight were about to take place.

"Come now, captain, the insult is a deadly one. I cannot allow you to raise your hand against a woman in public. If you prefer to meet me—as would be perhaps more fitting to our rank—in some other manner, of course you understand me, captain."

But the young officer had recovered his senses and was no longer listening.

At this moment, Rogojin appeared elbowing through the crowd; he took Nastasia's hand, drew it through his arm, and quickly carried her off.

Rogojin appeared to be exceedingly excited; he was trembling all over with excitement and agitation, and was as pale as a corpse.

As he carried Nastasia off, he turned and grimaced horribly in the officer's face, and with low malice observed:

"Tfu! look what the fellow took. Look at the wale on his cheek! Ha, ha!"

Recollecting himself, however, and seeing at a glance the sort of people he had to deal with, the officer turned his back on both his opponents, and courteously, but concealing his face with his handkerchief, approached the prince, who was now rising from the chair into which he had so suddenly collapsed.

"Prince Muishkin, I believe? the gentleman to whom I had the honour of being introduced?"

"She is mad, insane,—I assure you, she is," replied the prince in trembling tones, holding out both his hands towards the officer, for some unknown reason or other.

"I cannot boast of any acquaintance with the lady, of course, but I wish to know your name."

He bowed and retired without waiting for an answer.

Five seconds after the disappearance of the last actor in this scene the police appeared. The whole episode had not lasted more than a couple of minutes. Some of the spectators had risen from their places, and departed altogether; some merely exchanged seats near the disturbance for places a little further off; others were delighted with the occurrence, and talked and laughed over it for a long time.

In a word, the incident closed as such incidents do; the orchestra began to play something or other, and the whole thing became ancient history. The prince walked away after the Epanchin party. Had he thought of looking round to the left after he had been pushed so unceremoniously into the chair, he

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would have observed Aglaya standing some twenty yards away. She had stayed to watch the scandalous scene in spite of her mother's and sister's anxious cries to her to come away.

Prince S. ran up to her and persuaded her, at last, to come home with them.

Lizabetha Prokofievna remembered afterwards that Aglaya returned to her in such a state of agitation that it is doubtful whether she heard a word of all the reproaches she received; and it was only a couple of minutes later, when they had reached the park road, that Aglaya suddenly remarked, in her usual calmly impudent voice:

"I wished to see how the farce would end."

III.

THE occurrence at the Vauxhall filled both mother and daughters with something very like terror. In agitation and trembling excitement Lizabetha Prokofievna and they were nearly running all the way home.

In her opinion there was so much disclosed and laid bare by the episode, that in spite of the chaotic condition of her mind, she was able to feel more or less decided on certain points which, up to now, had been long in a semi-decided condition.

However, one and all of the party quite realized that something really important had happened, and that, perhaps fortunately enough, something which had hitherto been enveloped in the obscurity of guess-work had now begun to come forth a little from the mists, and to stand forward among things more or less comprehensible.

In spite of Prince S.'s assurances and explanations of Evgenie Pavlovitch's position, the latter gentleman's real character, or at least present position, were at last coming to light. He was convicted, formally, of intimacy with that creature. So thought Lizabetha Prokofievna and her two elder daughters.

But the real upshot of the whole business was that the number of riddles to be solved was augmented. The two girls, though rather irritated at the exaggerated alarm, and in haste to depart from the scene of the "row," had been unwilling to disturb their mother at first with questions requiring answers.

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Besides this, they could not help thinking that their sister Aglaya probably knew more about the whole matter than both they and their mother put together.

Prince S. looked as black as night, and was quiet and moody. Mrs. Epanchin did not say a word to him all the way home, and he did not seem to observe the fact. Adelaida tried to pump him a little by asking, "who was the uncle they were talking about, and what was it that had happened at St. Petersburg?" But he had merely muttered something disconnected about "making inquiries," and that "of course it was all nonsense." "Oh, that of course," replied Adelaida, and asked no more questions. Aglaya, too, was very quiet; and the only remark she made all the way home was that they were "walking much too fast to be pleasant."

Once she turned and observed the prince speeding along after them from behind; noticing his anxiety to catch them up she smiled ironically, and then looked back no more. At length, just as they neared the house, General Epanchin came out and met them; he had but lately arrived from town.

His first word was to inquire after Evgenie Pavlovitch. But Lizabetha stalked statelily past him, and neither looked at him nor answered his question.

He immediately judged from the eyes of his daughters and Prince S. that there was a thunderstorm brewing in the household.

His face, however, bore evidence of unusual perturbation without this added worry.

He immediately button-holed Prince S., and standing at the front door, engaged in a long whispered conversation with him. By the excited aspect of both of them, when they entered the balcony and approached Mrs. Epanchin, it was evident that they had been discussing very disturbing news.

Little by little the family gathered together upstairs in Lizabetha Prokofievna's apartments, and the prince found himself all alone on the balcony when he arrived. He settled himself in one corner and sat waiting. He knew not what he expected, but he waited on for something. He never thought of going away—it never struck him to do so, with all this disturbance raging in the house. He seemed to have forgotten all the world, and would gladly sit on where he was for two years on end. From upstairs he caught snatches of excited conversation every now and then.

He could not say how long he sat there. It grew late and became quite dark.

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Suddenly Aglaya entered the balcony. She seemed to be quite calm, though a little pale.

Observing the prince, whom she evidently did not expect to find here, alone in the corner, she smiled incredulously, and approached him:

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

The prince muttered something, blushed, and jumped up; but Aglaya immediately sat down beside his chair; so he re-seated himself also.

She looked suddenly, but attentively into his face, then out of the window, as though thinking of something else, and then again into his eyes.

"Perhaps she wants to laugh at me," thought the prince, "but no; for if she did she certainly would do so."

"Would you like some tea? I'll order you some," she said after a minute or two of silence.

"N—no thanks, I don't know—"

"Don't know! how can you not know? By-the-bye, look here—if someone were to call you out to a duel, what should you do? I wished to ask you this—some time ago—"

"Why? nobody would ever challenge me to a duel!"

"But if they were to, would you be dreadfully frightened?"

"I daresay I should be—much alarmed!"

"Seriously? then are you a coward?"

"N—no!—I don't think so. A coward is a man who is afraid and runs away; the man who is frightened but does *not* run away, is not quite a coward," said the prince with a smile, after a moment's thought.

"And you wouldn't run away?"

"No—I don't think I should run away," replied the prince, laughing outright at last at Aglaya's question.

"Though I am a woman I should certainly not run away for anything," said Aglaya, in a slightly pained voice. "However, I see you are laughing at me and twisting your face up as usual in order to make yourself look more interesting. Now tell me, they generally shoot at twenty paces, don't they? at *ten*, some of them? I suppose if at *ten* they *must* be either wounded or killed, mustn't they?"

"I don't think they often hit each other at duels."

"How not! they killed Pouschkin that way."

"That may have been an accident."

"Not a bit of it; it was a duel to the death, and they killed him."

"The bullet struck so low down that probably his anta-

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gonist would never have aimed at that part of him—people never do; he would have aimed at his chest or head; so that probably the bullet hit him accidently; it was a miss. I have been told this by competent authorities."

"Well, a soldier once told me—I forget how I happened to be talking to him, he was a private—that they were all ordered to aim at a man's middle; when they are called up to shoot the order is, 'shoot at their middles!' So you see they don't aim at the chest or head but shoot at the man's middle on purpose. I asked some officer about this afterwards, and he said it was perfectly right."

"That is probably because of the distance, though."

"Can you shoot at all?"

"No, I have never shot in my life."

"Can't you even load a pistol?"

"No! that is, I understand how it's done, of course, but I have never done it."

"Then, you *don't* know how, of course, for this is a matter that needs practice. Now listen and learn; in the first place buy good *pistol* powder, not damp (they say it mustn't be at all damp, but very dry), some fine kind, it is—you must ask for *pistol* quality, and not the stuff they load canons with, mind. They say one makes the bullets oneself, somehow or other; you form them out of something, you know— Have you got a pistol?"

"No—and I don't want one," said the prince, bursting out laughing.

"Oh, what *nonsense*. You absolutely *must* buy one, a good one, French or English are the best they say. Then take a little powder, about a thimble full, or perhaps, two thimbles full, and pour it into the barrel. Take the larger quantity, better. Then push in a bit of soldier's cloth, (it *must* be soldier's cloth they say, for some reason or other); you can easily get a bit off some old uniform, or off somebody's front door; it's used to keep the cold out. Well, when you have pushed the cloth down, put the bullet in; do you hear now? the bullet *last* and the powder first, not the other way, or the pistol won't shoot, *mind* now—what are you laughing at? I wish you to buy a pistol and practice every day, and you must learn to hit a mark for *certain*, will you?"

The prince only laughed. Aglaya stamped her foot with annoyance.

Her serious air, however, during this conversation had surprised him, considerably. He had a feeling that he ought to be asking her something, that there was something he wanted

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to find out far more important than how to load a pistol; but his thoughts had all vanished and he was only aware that she was sitting by him, and talking to him and that he was looking at her; as to what she happened to be saying to him, that did not matter in the least.

The general now appeared on the balcony, coming from upstairs. He was on his way out, with an expression of determination on his face and of much preoccupation and worry besides.

"Ah! Lef Nicolaievitch, it's you, is it? Where are you off to now?" he asked, oblivious of the fact that the prince had not showed the least intention of moving from his place. "Come along with me; I want to say a word or two to you."

"*Au revoir*, then!" said Aglaya, holding out her hand to the prince.

It was quite dark on the balcony now, and the prince could not see her face very clearly at this moment, but a minute or two after, when he and the general had left the balcony, he suddenly flushed up violently, and squeezed his right hand tightly up. It appeared that he and the general were going in the same direction.

In spite of the lateness of the hour, the general was hurrying away to talk to someone upon some important subject. Meanwhile he talked incessantly but disconnectedly with the prince and continually brought in the name of Lizabetha Prokofievna.

If the prince had been in a condition to pay more attention to what the general was saying, he would have discovered that the latter was desirous of drawing some information out of him, or indeed of asking him some question outright; but that he could not make up his mind to approach the exact subject he wished to touch upon.

To his own shame the prince felt so absent, that from the very first he could not attend to a word the old fellow was saying; and when the general suddenly stopped before him with some excited question or other, he was obliged to confess, ignominiously, that he did not know what in the world he had been talking about.

The general shrugged his shoulders.

"How strange everyone, yourself included, have become of late," said he; "I was telling you that I cannot in the least understand Lizabetha Prokofievna's ideas and agitation. She is in hysterics up there, and moans and says that we have been 'shamed and disgraced.'"

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"Who? How? Why? When? What with?"

"I confess that I am very much to blame myself; I do not conceal the fact; you know what I mean; but the conduct, the very irregular behaviour, of this restless woman (you know who?) must really be kept within proper limits, by the police if necessary, and I am just on my way now to talk the question over with a friend, and make some arrangements.

"It can all be managed quietly and gently, even kindly, by my own private friends in authority, and without the slightest fuss or noise. I foresee that the future is pregnant with events, too, and that there is much that needs explanation; there is intrigue in the wind; but if on one side nothing is known, on the other side they will explain nothing; *I* have heard nothing about it, nor have *you*, nor *he*, nor *she*—who *has* heard about it—I should like to know? How *can* all this be explained except by the fact that more than half of it is mirage or a phenomenon like the light of the moon, or something of that sort. What do *you* think?"

"*She* is insane," muttered the prince, suddenly recollecting all that had passed, with a spasm of great pain at his heart.

"One word on that point. I too had that idea, and I slept in peace with it; but there is too much order and method about the business; I do not believe in the theory of madness! The woman is a fool, of course; but she is not only not insane, she is cunning to a degree. Her sally of this evening about Evgenie's uncle proves that conclusively. It was *villainous* of her, simply jesuitical, and it was all invented for some special purpose."

"What about Evgenie's uncle?"

"My goodness, Lef Nicolaievitch, why, you can't have heard a single word I said! Look at me, I'm still trembling all over with the dreadful shock; it is that that kept me in town so late. Evgenie Pavlovitch's uncle—"

"Well?" cried the prince.

"Shot himself this morning, at seven o'clock. A respected, eminent old man of seventy, an epicurean; and exactly point for point as she described it; a sum of money, a considerable sum of state money gone."

"Why, how could she—"

"What, know of it? Ha, ha, ha! Why, there was a whole crowd of admirers the moment she appeared on the scene. You know what sort of people surround her nowadays, and solicit the honour of her acquaintance.

"Of course she might easily have heard the news—why, all

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Petersburg, if not, all Pavlofsk, knows it by now. Look at the *finesse* of her observation about Evgenie's uniform. I mean, her remark that he had retired in good time! There's a venomous remark for you, if you like! No, no! there's no insanity there! Of course I refuse to believe that Evgenie Pavlovitch could have known beforehand of the catastrophe; that is, that at such and such a day at seven o'clock, and all that; but he might well have had a presentiment of the truth. And I—all of us—Prince S. and everybody believed that he was to inherit a large fortune from this uncle. It's dreadful, horrible! Mind, I don't suspect Evgenie of anything, be quite clear on that point; but the thing is a little suspicious for all that. Prince S. is very painfully impressed by the circumstance. Altogether it is a very extraordinary combination of circumstances, all round."

"What suspicion attaches to Evgenie Pavlovitch?"

"Oh, none at all! He has behaved very well indeed. I didn't mean to drop any sort of hint. His own fortune is intact, I firmly believe; Lizabetha Prokofievna, of course, refuses to listen to anything whatever. That's the worst of it all, these family catastrophes or quarrels, or whatever you like to call them. You know, prince, you are a friend of the family, so I don't mind telling you; it now appears that Evgenie Pavlovitch proposed to Aglaya a month ago, and was refused."

"Impossible!" cried the prince.

"Why? Do you know anything about it? look here," continued the general, more agitated than ever, and trembling with excitement, "may be I have been letting the cat out of the bag too freely with you, if so, it is because you are—that sort of man, you know! Perhaps you have some special information?"

"I know nothing about Evgenie Pavlovitch!" said the prince.

"Nor do I! they always bury me under ground when there's anything going on; they don't seem to reflect that it is unpleasant to a man to be treated so! I won't stand it! We have just had a terrible scene!—mind—I speak to you as I would to my own son! Aglaya laughs at her mother. Her sisters found out about Evgenie having proposed and been rejected, by a guess.

"I tell you, my dear fellow, she is such an extraordinary, such a self-willed, fantastical little creature, that you wouldn't believe it. Every high quality, every brilliant trait of heart and mind, are to be found in her, and, with it all, so much caprice

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and irony—in a word, so much temper—that—I really don't know what to do with her.

"She has just been laughing at her mother to her very face, and at her sisters, and at Prince S., and everybody excepting myself. She rarely laughs at me. You know I love the child so—I love her even when she laughs at me, and I believe the wild little creature has a special fondness for me for that very reason. She is fonder of me than of any of the others. I dare swear she has had a good laugh at *you* before now. You were having a quiet talk just now, I observed, after all the thunder and lightning upstairs. She was sitting with you just as though there had been no row at all."

The prince blushed painfully in the darkness, and closed his right hand tightly, but he said nothing.

"My dear good Prince Lef Nicolaievitch," began the general again, suddenly, "both I and Lizabetha Prokofievna—(who has began to respect you once more, and me through you, goodness knows why!)—we both love you very sincerely, and esteem you, in spite of any appearances to the contrary. But just think, my dear boy, what a horrible riddle it must have been to us when that calm, cold, little spitfire, Aglaya—(for she stood up to her mother and answered her questions with inexpressible contempt, and pitched into me horribly, because, like a fool, I thought it my duty to assert myself as head of the family)—when Aglaya stood up of a sudden and informed me that *that* woman is mad. Strangely enough, she used exactly the same expression as you did. 'As if you have only just guessed that,' says she; 'why, she (Nastasia) has taken it into her head to marry me to Prince Lef Nicolaievitch, and therefore is doing her best to choke Evgenie Pavlovitch off, and rid the house of him.' That's all she said. She would not give the slightest explanation; she burst out laughing, banged the door, and went away. We all stood there with our mouths open. Well, I was told afterwards of your little passage with Aglaya, and—and—dear prince—you are a good, sensible fellow, don't be angry if I speak out—she is laughing at you, my boy. She is enjoying herself like a child, at your expense, and therefore, since she is a child, don't be angry with her, and don't think anything of it, dear fellow. I assure you, she is simply making a fool of you, just as she does with one and all of us out of pure lack of something better to do. Well—good-bye! You know our feelings, don't you—our sincere feelings for yourself? They are unalterable, you know, dear boy, under all circumstances, but— Well, here we part; I must go down to the right. Rarely have I sat

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so uncomfortably in my saddle, as they say, as I now sit. Oh! these country places!"

Left to himself at the cross roads, the prince glanced around him, quickly crossed the road towards the brilliantly-lighted window of a neighbouring house, and unfolded a tiny scrap of paper which he had clasped tight within his right hand during the whole of his conversation with the general.

He read the note in the uncertain rays that fell from the window. It was as follows:—

"To-morrow morning, I shall be at the green bench in the park at seven, and shall wait there for you. I have made up my mind to speak to you about a most important matter which nearly concerns yourself.

"*P.S.*—I trust that you will not show this note to anyone. Though I am ashamed of giving you such instructions, I feel that I must do so, considering who and what you are. I therefore write the words, and blush for your simple character.

"*P.P.S.*—It is the same green bench that I showed you before. There! aren't you ashamed of yourself? I felt that it was necessary to repeat even *that* information."

The note was written and folded anyhow, evidently in a great hurry, and probably just before Aglaya had come down to the balcony.

In inexpressible agitation, amounting almost to fear, the prince sneaked quickly away from the window, away from the light, like a frightened thief.

As he glided silently away into the darkness, however, he collided with some gentleman, who seemed to spring up from the earth at his feet.

"I was watching for you, prince," said the individual.

"Is that you, Keller?" said the prince, in surprise.

"Yes, I've been looking for you; I waited for you at the Epanchins' house, but of course I could not come in. I dogged you from behind as you walked along with the general. Well, prince, here is Keller, absolutely at your service—command him!—ready to sacrifice himself—even to die in case of need."

"But—why?"

"Oh, why—of course, you'll be challenged; that was young Lieutenant Moloftsoff. I know him, or rather *of* him; he won't pass an insult. He will take no notice of Rogojin and myself, probably; and, therefore, you are the only one left in to account

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for. You'll have to pay for the broken bottles, prince. He has been asking about you—I heard him myself—and, undoubtedly, his friend will call on you to-morrow—perhaps he is at your house already. If you would do me the honour to have me for a second, prince, I shall be *too* happy. That's why I have been looking for you now."

"Duel! You've come to talk about a duel, too!" the prince burst out laughing, to the great astonishment of Keller. He laughed frantically.

Keller, who had been on pins and needles, and in a fever of excitement to offer himself as "second," was very near being offended by the prince's merry laughter.

"You caught his hand, you know, prince. No man of proper pride can stand that sort of treatment in public."

"Yes, and he gave me a fearful dig in the chest," cried the prince, still laughing. "What are we to fight about? I shall beg his pardon, that's all; and if we must fight—we'll fight. Let him have a shot at me, by all means; I should rather like it. Ha, ha, ha! I know how to load a pistol now; do you know how to load a pistol, Keller? First, you have to buy the powder, you know; it mustn't be wet, and it mustn't be that coarse stuff that they load cannons with—it must be pistol powder. Then you must first pour the powder in, and get hold of a bit of soldier's cloth from some door, and then shove the bullet in. But don't shove the bullet in before the powder, because the thing wouldn't go off—do you hear, Keller, the thing wouldn't go off. Ha, ha, ha! Isn't that a grand reason, Keller, my friend, eh? Do you know, my dear fellow, I really must kiss you, and embrace you, this very moment. Ha, ha! How was it you so suddenly popped up in front of me as you did? Come to my house as soon as you can, and we'll have some champagne. We'll all drink ourselves drunk. Do you know I have a dozen of champagne in Lebedeff's cellar? Lebedeff sold them to me the day after I arrived. I took the lot. We'll invite the whole company. Are you going to do any sleeping to-night?"

"As much as usual, prince—why?"

"Pleasant dreams then—ha, ha!"

The prince crossed the road, and disappeared in the park, leaving the astonished Keller in a state of ludicrous wonder. He had never before seen the prince in such a strange condition of mind, and could never have imagined the possibility of such a state of affairs.

"Fever, probably," he said to himself, "for the man is all nerves, and this business has been a little too much for him;

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he is not *afraid*, that's clear; this sort of fellow never funks! H'm! champagne! that was an interesting item of news, at all events!—twelve bottles!—dear me, that's a dozen! a very respectable little stock indeed! I bet anything Lebedeff lent somebody money on deposit of this dozen of champagne.

"Hum! he's a nice fellow, is this prince! I really like this sort of man. Well, I needn't be wasting time here, and if it's a case of champagne, why—there's no time like the present!"

That the prince was in a fever was of course nothing more than the truth. He wandered and raved about the park for a long while, and at last came to himself in a lonely alley. He was vaguely conscious that he had already paced this particular walk—from that large, dark tree to the bench at the other end—about a hundred yards altogether—at least thirty times backwards and forwards.

As to recollecting what he had been thinking of all that while, he could not—if he wished to ever so much. He caught himself, however, at one thought, which made him roar with laughter, though there was nothing really to laugh at in it; but he felt that he *must* laugh, and go on laughing.

It struck him that the idea of the duel might not have occurred to Keller alone, but that his lesson in the art of pistol-loading might have had some connection with such an idea, and was not altogether accidental! "Pooh! nonsense!" he said to himself, struck by another thought, of a sudden, "why, she was immensely surprised to find me there on the balcony, and laughed and talked about *tea!* and yet at that very moment she had this little note in her hand, therefore she must have known that I was sitting on the balcony. So, why was she surprised? Ha, ha, ha!"

He pulled the note out and kissed it; then paused and reflected. "How strange it all is! how strange!" he muttered, melancholy enough now.

In moments of great joy, he invariably felt a sensation of melancholy come over him—he could not tell you why.

He looked intently around him, and wondered why he had come here; he was very tired, so he approached the bench and sat down on it. Around him was profound silence, the music in the Vauxhall was all over. The park seemed quite empty, though it was not, in reality, later than half-past eleven. It was a quiet, warm, bright night—a real Petersburg night of early June; but in the dense overgrown part of the park, where he was sitting, it was almost pitch dark.

If anyone had come up at this moment and told him that he

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was in love, passionately in love, he would have rejected the idea with astonishment, and, perhaps, with irritation. And if anyone had added that Aglaya's note was a love-letter, and that it contained an appointment to a lover's rendezvous—he would have blushed with shame for the speaker, and, probably, challenged him to a duel.

All this would have been perfectly sincere on his part, too; and he had never for a moment entertained the slightest idea of the possibility of this girl loving him, or even of such a thing as himself falling in love with her. The possibility of being loved himself, "a man like me," as he put it, he ranked among ridiculous suppositions. It appeared to him that it was simply a joke on Aglaya's part, if there really were anything in it at all; but he was very fond of jokes, and thought no ill of them; so that his pre-occupation must have been caused by something different.

As to the few words which the general had let slip about Aglaya laughing at everybody, and at himself most of all—he entirely believed them. He did not feel the slightest sensation of offence, on the contrary, he was quite certain that it was all right.

His whole thoughts were now as to next morning early; he would see her; he would sit by her on that little green bench, and listen to how pistols were loaded, and look at her. He would ask for nothing more.

The question as to what she might have to say to him of special interest to himself scarcely occurred to him more than once or twice. He did not doubt, for a moment, that she really had some such subject of conversation in store, but so very little interested in the matter was he that it did not strike him to wonder what that subject could be. The crunch of gravel on the path suddenly caused him to raise his head.

A man, whose face it was difficult to recognise in the gloom, approached the bench, and sat down beside him. The prince quickly slid along till he was almost touching the new arrival and peered into his face. He at once recognised the livid features of Rogojin.

"I knew you'd be meandering about somewhere here. I didn't have to look about for you very long," muttered the latter between his teeth.

It was the first time they had met since the encounter on the staircase at the hotel.

Painfully struck as he was with this sudden apparition of Rogojin, the prince, for some little while, was unable to collect his thoughts. Rogojin, evidently, saw and understood the

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impression he had made; and though he seemed more or less confused at first, yet he began talking with what looked like assumed ease and freedom. However, the prince soon changed his mind on this score, and thought that there was not only no affectation of indifference, but that Rogojin was not even particularly agitated. If there were a little apparent awkwardness about him, it could only be as to externals, for the man's spirit was quite unchangeable.

"How did you—find me here?" asked the prince for the sake of saying something.

"Keller told me (I found him at your place) that you were in the park; 'of course he is!' I thought, 'I might have taken my oath to that!'"

"Why so?" asked the prince, quietly.

Rogojin smiled, but did not explain.

"I received your letter, Lef Nicolaievitch—what's the good of all that—it's no use, you know—now I've come to you from *her*; she bade me tell you that she must see you, she has something to say to you, she says you *must* come. She told me this to-day."

"I'll come to-morrow. Now I'm going home—are you coming to my house?"

"Why should I? I've given you the message—good-bye!"

"Won't you come in?" asked the prince, quietly.

"What an extraordinary man you are, prince; I wonder at you!" Rogojin laughed sarcastically.

"Why not? why are you so furious with me?" asked the prince, sadly but excitedly. Why, you know yourself now that all you suspected is quite unfounded. I felt you were still angry with me, though; do you know why? because you tried to cut my throat for me—that's why you don't shake off your wrath against me. I tell you that I only remember the Parfen Rogojin with whom I exchanged crosses, and vowed brotherhood. I wrote you this in yesterday's letter, in order that you might forget all that madness on your part, and that you might not feel called to talk about it when we met. Why do you avoid me? Why do you hold your hand back from me? I tell you again, I consider all that has passed a delirium, an insane dream. I can understand all you did, and all you were that day, as I understand myself. What you were then imagining was not the case, and could never be the case. Why then must you continue to rage against me like this?"

"You don't know what rage is!" laughed Rogojin, in reply to the prince's heated address.

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He was standing a pace or two away from the prince, and had his hands behind him.

"No, I shall never come to your house again," he added.

"Why? do you hate me so much as all that?"

"I don't love you, Lef Nicolaievitch, and, therefore, what would be the use of my coming to see you? You are just like a child—you want a plaything, and it must be taken out of its drawer and given you—and then you don't know how to work it. You are simply repeating all you said in your letter, and what's the use? Of course I trust you; I believe every word you say, and I know perfectly well that you neither did or ever can deceive me in any way, and yet, I don't love you. You write that you've forgotten everything, and only remember 'your brother Parfen, with whom you exchanged crosses,' and that you don't remember anything about the Rogojin who aimed a knife at your throat. What do you know about my feelings, eh?" (Rogojin laughed disagreeably.) "Here you are holding out your brotherly forgiveness to me for a thing that I have never repented in the slightest degree. For, do you know, I did not *think* of it again all that evening, and all my thoughts were centred on something else—"

"Not think of it again? of course you didn't;" cried the prince, "and I dare sware that you came straight away down here to Pavlofsk to listen to the music and dog *her* about in the crowd, and stare at her, just as you did to-day. There's nothing surprising in that! If you hadn't been in that condition of mind that you could think of nothing but one subject, you would, probably, never have raised your knife upon me. I had a presentiment of what you would do, that day, ever since I saw you first in the morning; do you know yourself what you were that day? I knew you would try to murder me even at the very moment we exchanged crosses. What did you take me to the old woman for? Did you think to stay your hand by doing so? Perhaps you did not put your thoughts into words, but you and I were thinking the same thing, or feeling the same thing looming over us, at the same moment. What should you think of me now if you had not raised your knife to me—the knife which God averted from my throat? I would have been guilty of suspecting you all the same—and you would have intended the murder all the same; therefore we should have been as mutually guilty in any case. Come, don't frown; you needn't laugh at me, either; you say you 'haven't repented.' Repented! you, probably, couldn't do it if you were to try; you dislike

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me too much for that. Why, if I were an angel of light, and as innocent before you as a babe, you would still loathe me if you believed that *she* loved me, instead of loving yourself. That's jealousy—that is the real jealousy.

"But do you know what I have been thinking out during this last week, Parfen? I'll tell you. What if she loves you now better than anyone? and what if she torments you *because* she loves you, and in proportion to her love for you, so she torments you the more? She won't tell you this, of course; you must have eyes to see.

"Why do you suppose she consents to marry you? She must have a reason, and that reason she will tell you some day. Some women insist upon the kind of love you have, and she is probably one of these. Your love and your wild nature impress her and strike her fancy. Do you know that a woman is capable of driving a man crazy almost, with her cruelties and ironies, and feels not one single pang of regret, because she looks at him and says to herself, 'There! I'll torment this man nearly into his grave, and then, oh! how I'll compensate him for it all with my love!'"

Rogojin listened to the end, and then burst out laughing:

"Why, prince, I declare you must have had a taste of this sort of thing yourself—haven't you? I *have* heard tell of something of the kind, you know; is it true?"

"What? what can you have heard?" said the prince, shuddering. He paused to hear what Rogojin would reply, in great agitation.

Rogojin continued to laugh loud and long. He had listened to the prince's speech with curiosity and some satisfaction. The speaker's warmth and joyful exultation amused and impressed him.

"Why, I've not only heard tell of it; I see it for myself," he said. "When have you ever spoken like that before? It wasn't like yourself, prince. Why, if I hadn't heard this report about you, I should never have come all this way into the park—at midnight, too!"

"I don't understand you in the least, Parfen."

"Oh, *she* told me all about it long ago, and, to-night, I saw for myself. *I* saw you at the music, you know, and whom you were sitting with. She swore to me yesterday, and again to-day, that you are as spoony as a cat on Aglaya Ivanovna. But that's all the same to me, prince, and it's not my affair at all; for if you have ceased to love *her*, *she* has not ceased to love *you*. You know, of course, that she wants to marry you off to that girl? eh? She's sworn to it! ha, ha! She says to me,

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'otherwise I won't marry *you*. When they go to church, we'll go too—and not till then.' What on earth does she mean by it? *I* don't know, and I never did. Either she loves you without limits, or—well, if she loves you, why does she wish to marry you to another girl? She says, 'I want to see him made happy,' which is to say—she loves you."

"I both wrote, and I say to you once more, that she is not in her right mind," said the prince, who had listened with anguish to what Rogojin said.

"Goodness knows—you may be wrong there! At all events, she named the day this evening, as we left the music square. 'In three weeks,' says she, 'and perhaps sooner, we shall be married.' She swore to it, took off her cross and kissed it. So it all depends upon you, now, prince, you see. Ha, ha!"

"That's all pure raving and nonsense. What you say about me, Parfen, never can and never will be. To-morrow, I shall come and see you—"

"How can she be mad," Rogojin interrupted, "when she is sane enough for other people and only mad for you? How can she write letters *there*, if she's mad? If she were insane they would observe it in her letters."

"What letters?" said the prince, alarmed.

"She writes to *that* house—to *her*—and the girl reads the letters. Haven't you heard?—you are sure to hear; she's sure to show you the letters herself."

"I won't believe this!" cried the prince.

"Why, prince, my boy, you've only gone a few steps on this road, I perceive. You are evidently a mere beginner. Wait a bit. Before long, you'll have your own staff of police, you'll watch, yourself, day and night; and you'll know every little petty thing that goes on there—that is, if—"

"Drop that subject. Rogojin, and never mention it again. And listen here, Parfen: as I have sat here, and talked, and listened, it has suddenly struck me that to-morrow is my birthday. It must be about twelve o'clock, now; come home with me—do, and we'll see the day in. We'll have some wine, and you shall wish me—I don't know what to wish—but you, especially *you*, must wish me a good wish, and I shall wish you full happiness in return. Otherwise, hand me over my cross back again. You didn't return it to me next day after—that. It's on your neck—isn't it, now? haven't you got it on?"

"Yes, I have," said Rogojin.

"Come along, then. I don't wish to meet my new year without you—my new life, I should say, for a new life is be-

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ginning for me. Did you know, Parfen, that a new life was beginning for me?"

"I see for myself that it is so—and I shall tell her the news—you are not quite yourself to-day, Lef Nicolaievitch."

IV.

THE prince observed with great surprise, as he approached his own house accompanied by Rogojin, that a large company of people were assembled on his balcony, which was brilliantly lighted up. The company seemed merry and were noisily laughing and talking—even quarrelling, to judge from the sounds. At all events they were clearly amusing themselves, and the prince observed further—on a closer investigation—that all had champagne before them. To judge from the lively condition of certain of the party, it was to be supposed that a considerable quantity of champagne had been consumed already.

All the guests were known to the prince; but the curious part of the matter was that they had all arrived on the same evening, as though with one accord, and although he had only himself recollected the fact that it was his birthday a few moments since.

"You must have told somebody you were going to trot out the champagne, and that's why they are all come!" muttered Rogojin, as the two entered the glass balcony. "We know all about that! you've only to whistle and they come up in shoals!" he continued, almost angrily. He was doubtless thinking of his own late experiences, with his boon companions and hangers-on.

All surrounded the prince with exclamations of welcome, and on hearing of his birthday with cries of congratulation and delight; many of them were very noisy, some were pretty quiet.

The presence of certain of those in the room surprised the prince vastly, but the guest whose advent filled him with the greatest wonder—almost amounting to alarm,—was Evgenie Pavlovitch. The prince could not believe his eyes when he beheld the latter, and could not help thinking that something was wrong.

Lebedeff ran up promptly to explain the arrival of all these gentlemen. He was himself rather inclined to alcoholic elevation, but the prince gathered from his long-winded periods that the

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party had assembled gradually and quite naturally, even accidentally.

First of all Hippolyte had arrived, early in the evening, and feeling decidedly better, had determined to await the prince on the balcony. There Lebedeff had joined him, and his family had followed—that is, all his daughters and General Ivolgin, who was staying with him. One Burdofsky had brought Hippolyte, and stayed on with him. Gania and Ptitsin had dropped in accidentally not long since; then came Keller, and he and Colia had insisted on having champagne. Evgenie Pavlovitch had only dropped in half-an-hour or so ago. Lebedeff had served the champagne readily.

"My own though, prince, my own, mind," he said, "and there'll be some supper later on; my daughter is getting it ready now. Come and sit down, prince, we are all waiting for you, we want you with us to decide the question—fancy what we have been discussing: 'to be or not to be!'—out of 'Hamlet,' you know! that's the question of the day, prince! Mr. Hippolyte has been eloquent to a degree—sit down, sit down!"

"I have waited for you on purpose, and am very glad to see you arrive so *happy*," said Hippolyte, when the prince came forward to press the latter's hand, immediately after greeting pretty Vera Lebedeff, who promptly left the room again.

"And how do you know that I am 'so happy?'"

"I can see it by your face! Say 'how do you do' to the others, and come and sit down here, quick—I've been waiting for you!" he added, accentuating the fact that he had waited. On the prince remarking, "Will it not be injurious to you to sit out so late?" he replied that he could not believe that he had thought himself dying, as he had imagined, three days or so ago; and that he never had felt himself better than this evening.

Burdofsky next jumped up and explained that he had come in by accident, having escorted Hipployte from town. He pressed the prince's hand and sat down again.

The prince approached Evgenie Pavlovitch last of all. The latter immediately took his arm and strolled a few paces away.

"I have a couple of words to say to you," he began, "and those on a very important matter; let's go aside for a minute or two."

"Just a couple of words!" whispered another voice in the prince's other ear, and another hand took his other arm. The prince turned and to his great surprise observed a red, flushed face and a droll-looking figure which he recognised at once as that of Ferdishenko. Goodness knows where he had turned up from.

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"Do you remember Ferdishenko?" he asked.

"Where have *you* dropped from?" cried the prince.

"He is sorry for his sins now, prince," cried Keller. "He did not want to let you know he was here; he was hidden over there in the corner,—but he repents now, he feels his guilt."

"Why, what has he done?"

"I met him outside and brought him in—he's a gentleman who doesn't often allow his friends to see him, of late—but he's sorry now."

"Delighted, I'm sure!—I'll come back directly, gentlemen,—sit down there with the others, please,—excuse me one moment," said the host, getting away with difficulty in order to follow Evgenie.

"You are very gay here," began the latter, "and I have had quite a pleasant half hour while I waited for you. Now then, my dear Lef Nicolaievitch, this is what's the matter. I've arranged it all with Kurmuisheff, and have just come in to relieve your mind on that score. You need be under no apprehensions any longer; he was very sensible indeed, as he should be of course, for *I* think he was entirely to blame himself."

"What Kurmuisheff?"

"The young fellow whose hand you held back, don't you know? he was so wild with you that he was going to send a friend to you to-morrow morning."

"What humbug!"

"Of course it is humbug, and in humbug it would have ended, doubtless; but you know these fellows, they—"

"Excuse me, but I think you must have had something else that you wished to speak about, Evgenie Pavlovitch?"

"Of course, I have!" said the other, laughing. "You see, my dear fellow, to-morrow, very early in the morning, I must be off to town about this unfortunate business—(my uncle, you know!)—just imagine, my dear sir, it is all true—word for word—and, of course, everybody knew it excepting myself. All this has been such a blow to me that I have not managed to call in over there (Epanchins'). To-morrow I shall not see them either, because I shall be in town, you see. I may not be here for three days or more; in a word, my affairs are a little out of gear. But though my town business is, of course, *most* pressing, still I determined not to go away until I had seen yourself and had a clear understanding with you upon certain points, and that without loss of time. I will wait now if you will allow me, until the company departs; I may just as well, for I have nowhere else to go to, and I shall certainly not do

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any sleeping to-night; I'm far too excited for that. And finally, I must confess that, though I know it is bad form to hunt a fellow up and shove yourself down his throat, I have come to beg your friendship, my dear prince. You are an incomparable sort of a fellow; you don't lie at every step, as some men do; in fact, you don't lie at all; and there is a matter in which I need a true and sincere friend, for I really may claim to be among the number of *bona fide* unfortunates just now."

He laughed again.

"But the mischief is," said the prince, after a slight pause for reflection, "the mischief is, that goodness only knows when this party will break up. Hadn't we better stroll into the park? I'll excuse myself, there's no danger of their going away."

"No, no! I have my reasons for wishing them not to suspect us of being engaged in any specially important conversation; there are gentry present who are a little too much interested in our relations; you are not aware of that perhaps, prince? It will be a great deal better if they see that we are very friendly *without* special relations, don't you see? They'll all go in a couple of hours, and then I'll ask you to give me twenty minutes—half an hour at most."

"By all means! I assure you I am delighted—you need not have entered into all these explanations on my account. As for your remarks about friendship with me—thanks, very much, indeed. You must excuse my being a little absent this evening; do you know I cannot for the life of me be attentive to anything at all at this moment."

"I see, I see," said Evgenie, laughing gently. His laughter seemed very near the surface this evening.

"What do you see?" said the prince.

"I don't want you to suspect that I have simply come here to humbug and pump same information out of you!" said Evgenie, still laughing, and without making any direct reply to the question.

"Oh, but I haven't the slightest doubt that you *did* come to pump me," said the prince, laughing himself, at last; "and I daresay you are quite prepared to humbug me too, so far as that goes. But what of that? I'm not afraid of you; besides, you'll hardly believe it, I feel as though I really didn't care a scrap one way or the other, just now!—and—and—and as you are a capital fellow, I am convinced of that, I daresay we really *shall* end by being good friends. I like you very much, Evgenie Pavlovitch; I consider you a very, very decent fellow indeed."

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"Well, in any case, you are a most delightful man to have to deal with, be the business what it may," concluded Evgenie. "Come along now, I'll drink a glass to your health. I'm charmed to have entered into alliance with you. By the bye," he added suddenly, "has this Hippolyte boy come down to stay with you?"

"Yes."

"He's not going to die at once, I should think, is he?"

"Why?"

"Oh, I don't know, I've been half an hour here with him, and he—"

Hippolyte had been waiting for the prince all this time, and had never ceased looking at him and Evgenie Pavlovitch as they conversed in the corner. He became particularly animated when they approached the table once more. He was much disturbed in his mind, it seemed; the perspiration stood in large drops on his forehead; in his gleaming eyes it was easy to read impatience and eagerness as to something about to happen; his gaze wandered from face to face of those present, and from object to object in the room, apparently without aim.

He had taken a part, and an animated part in the noisy conversation of the company; but his animation was clearly the outcome of fever.

His talk was "scrappy" and negligent; he would break off in the middle of a sentence which he had begun with great interest, and forget what he had been talking about. The prince discovered to his dismay that Hippolyte had been allowed to drink two large glasses of champagne; the glass now standing by him being the third.

All this he found out afterwards; at this particular moment he did not notice anything very particularly.

"Do you know I am particularly glad that to-day is your birthday!" cried Hippolyte.

"Why?"

"You'll soon see. D'you know I had a feeling that there would be a lot of people here to-night; it's not the first time that my presentiments have been fulfilled. I wish I had known it was your birthday, I'd have brought you a present—perhaps I *have* got a present for you. Who knows? Ha, ha! How long is it now before daylight?"

"Not a couple of hours," said Ptitsin, looking at his watch. "What's the good of daylight now? One can read all night in the open air without it," said some one.

"The good of it! Well, I want just to see a little corner

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of the sun," said Hippolyte. "Can one drink to the sun's health, do you think, prince?"

"Oh, I daresay we can; but you had better be calm and lie down, Hippolyte—that's much more important."

"You are always preaching about resting; you are a regular nurse to me, prince. We won't go to sleep till the sun begins to shine."

Lebedeff, who, as aforesaid, was decidedly merry to-night, now launched off into a long and learned dissertation on the Apocalypse, during which poor Hippolyte fell fast asleep on his sofa in spite of his intention to wait till sunrise. Lebedeff's long-winded speech drove some of the party nearly out of their wits with impatience; but when he finished by remarking that supper ought to be about ready by that time, the discontented ones soon came round and applauded at least the last part of his dissertation. The prince, as he rose from the table, met Evgenie Pavlovitch's eye, and the latter smiled and nodded towards the slumbering Hippolyte.

"Tell me now, prince, why on earth did this boy here intrude himself upon you?" he asked, with such annoyance of tone and apparent irritation that the prince was quite surprised. "I wouldn't mind laying odds that he is up to some mischief."

"I have observed," said the prince, "that he seems to be an object of very singular interest to you to-day, Evgenie Pavlovitch. Why is it?"

"You may add that I have surely enough to think of, in all conscience, on my own account without him; and therefore it is all the more surprising that I cannot tear my eyes and thoughts away from his detestable physiognomy."

"Oh, come; he has a handsome enough face."

"Why, look at him—look at him now."

The prince glanced again at Evgenie Pavlovitch; the latter was causing him considerable surprise to-night.

V.

HIPPOLYTE, who had fallen asleep during Lebedeff's discourse, now suddenly woke up, just as though some one had jogged him in the side. He shuddered, raised himself on his arm, gazed around, and grew very pale. A look of

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what was almost terror crossed his face as he recollected all, and he said:

"What! are they all off? is it all over? is the sun up?" He trembled and caught at the prince's hand. "What time is it? Tell me, quick, for goodness' sake. How long have I slept?" he added, almost in despair, just as though he had overslept something upon which his whole fate depended.

"You have slept seven or perhaps eight minutes," said Evgenie Pavlovitch.

Hippolyte gazed eagerly at the latter, and mused for a few moments.

"Oh, is that all?" he said at last; "then I—"

He drew a long, deep breath of relief, as it seemed. He realized that all was *not* over as yet, that the sun had not risen, and that the guests had merely gone to supper, or were going. He smiled, and two hectic spots appeared on his cheeks.

"So you counted the minutes while I slept, did you, Evgenie Pavlovitch?" he said, ironically; "you have not taken your eyes off me all the evening—I have noticed that much, you see. Ah, Rogojin! I've just been dreaming about him, prince." he added, frowning. "Yes, by-the-bye," starting up, "where's the orator? where's Lebedeff? Has he finished? What did he talk about? Is it true, prince, that you once declared that 'beauty would save the world?' Great heaven! the prince says that beauty saves the world; and I declare that he only has such playful ideas as that because he's in love. Gentlemen, the prince is in love. I guessed it the moment he came in. Don't blush, prince; you make me sorry for you. What beauty saves the world? Colia told me that you are a zealous Christian; is it so? Colia says you call yourself a Christian."

The prince regarded him attentively, but said nothing.

"You don't answer me; perhaps you think I am very fond of you?" added Hippolyte, as though the words had been drawn from him.

"No, I don't think that. I know you don't love me."

"Why so? why so? Because I envy you, eh? you always think that, I know. But do you know why I am saying all this? Look here! I must have some more champagne—pour me out some, Keller, will you?"

"No, you're not to drink any more, Hippolyte. I won't let you." He moved the glass away.

"Well, perhaps you're right," said Hippolyte, musing. "They might say—yet, devil take them! what does it matter? —prince, what can it matter what people will say of us *then*,

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eh? I believe I'm half asleep. I've had such a dreadful dream—I've only just remembered it—prince, I don't wish you such dreams as that, though sure enough, perhaps, I *don't* love you much. Why wish a man evil, though you do not love him, eh? Give me your hand—let me press it sincerely. There—you've given me your hand—you must feel that I *do* press it sincerely, don't you? I don't think I shall drink any more. What time is it? Never mind, I know the time. The time has come, at all events. What! they are laying supper over there, are they? Then this table is free? Capital, gentlemen! I—hem! these gentlemen are not listening—prince, I will just read over an article I have here—but supper is more interesting, of course."

Here Hippolyte suddenly, and most unexpectedly, pulled out of his breast pocket a large sealed paper. This imposing-looking document he placed upon the table before him.

The effect of this sudden action upon the company was instantaneous. Evgenie Pavlovitch almost bounded off his chair in excitement. Rogojin drew a chair nearer the table with a look on his face as if he knew all about what was coming. Gania came nearer too; so did Lebedeff and the others—the paper packet seemed an object of great interest to the company in general. "What have you got there?" asked the prince, with some anxiety.

"At the first glimpse of the rising sun, prince, I will lie down, I told you I would, word of honour! you shall see!" cried Hippolyte. "No, no! you think I'm not in a condition to open the packet, do you?" he glared defiantly round at the audience in general.

The prince observed that he was trembling all over.

"None of us ever thought such a thing!" the prince replied for all. "Why should you suppose it of us? and what on earth are you going to read, Hippolyte? What is it?"

"Yes, what is it?" asked others. The packet sealed with red wax semeed to attract everyone, as though it were a magnet.

"I wrote this yesterday, myself, just after I saw you, prince, and told you I would come down here. I wrote all day and all night, and finished it this morning early; I had a dream."

"Hadn't we better hear it to-morrow?" asked the prince timidly.

"To-morrow, 'there will be no more time!'" laughed Hippolyte, hysterically. You needn't be afraid, I shall get through the whole thing in forty minutes, at most an hour! Look

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how interested everybody is! Everybody has drawn up near me, look! look at them all staring at my sealed packet! If I hadn't sealed it up it wouldn't have been half so effective! Ha, ha! that's mystery, that is; now then, gentlemen, shall I break the seal, or not? say the word; it's a mystery, I tell you."

"Better not read it now," said the prince, putting his hand on the packet.

"Yes, don't read it," cried Evgenie suddenly, so strangely disturbed was he that many of those present could not help wondering.

"Reading? none of your reading now?" said somebody; "it's supper time." "What sort of an article is it, for a paper? Probably it's very dull," said another. But the prince's look startled even Hippolyte.

"Then I'm not to read it?" he whispered, nervously. "Am I not to read it?" he repeated, gazing around at each face in turn. "What are you afraid of, prince?" he turned and asked the latter suddenly.

"What should I be afraid of?"

"Has any one a coin about them? Give me a twenty-copeak piece, somebody."

"There you are," said Lebedeff, handing him one; he thought the young fellow had gone mad.

"Vera Lukianovna," said Hippolyte, "toss it up, will you? eagle, I read; no eagle, I don't."

Vera Lebedeff tossed the coin into the air and let it fall on the table.

It was "eagles."

"Then I must read it," said Hippolyte in the tone of one bowing to the fiat of destiny. He could not have grown paler if a verdict of death had suddenly been read out to him.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen! I am about to break the seal," he continued, with determination. "I—I—of course I don't insist upon any one listening if they do not wish to."

With trembling fingers he broke the seal and drew out several sheets of letter-paper, smoothed them out before him, and began sorting them.

"What on earth does all this mean? What is he going to read?" muttered several voices.

Others said nothing; but one and all sat down and watched with curiosity. They began to think something strange might really be about to happen. Vera stood and trembled behind her father's chair, almost in tears with fright; Colia was nearly as much alarmed as she was. Lebedeff jumped up and put a

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couple of candles nearer to Hippolyte, so that he might see clearer to read.

"Gentlemen, this—you'll soon see what this is," began Hippolyte, and suddenly commenced his reading.

"It's headed, 'A Necessary Explanation,' with the motto, '*Après moi le déluge!*' Oh, deuce take it all; surely I can never have seriously written such a silly motto to it as that. Look here, gentlemen, I beg to give notice that all this is very likely terrible nonsense. It is only a few ideas of mine. If you think that there is anything mysterious coming—or in a word—"

"Better read on without any more beating about the bush," said Gania.

"Too much talk," said Rogojin, breaking the silence for the first time.

Hippolyte glanced at him suddenly, and when their eyes met Rogojin showed his teeth in a disagreeable smile, and said the following strange words:

"That's not the way to settle the business, my friend; that's not the way at all."

Of course nobody knew what Rogojin meant by this; but his words made a deep impression upon all.

As for Hippolyte, their effect upon him was astounding. He trembled so that the prince was obliged to hold him down with his hand, and would certainly have cried out, but that his voice seemed to have entirely left him for the moment. For a minute or two he could not speak at all, but panted and stared at Rogojin. At last he managed to ejaculate:

"Then it was *you* who came—*you*—*you*?"

"Came where? what do you mean?" asked Rogojin dubiously. But Hippolyte, panting and choking with excitement and madness, interrupted him:

"*You* came to me last week, in the night, at two o'clock, the day I was with you in the morning. Confess it was *you*?"

"Last week? in the night? have you gone cracked, my good friend?

Hippolyte paused and considered, After a while a smile of cunning—almost triumph—crossed his lips.

"It was you," he murmured, almost in a whisper, but with absolute conviction of tone. "Yes, it was *you* who came to my room and sat silently on a chair at my window for a whole hour—more. It was between one and two at night; you rose and went out at about three. It was *you, you!* Why you should

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have frightened me so, why you should have wished to torment me like that I cannot tell you,—but *you* it was."

There was absolute hatred in his eyes as he said this, but his look of fear and his trembling had not left him the while.

"You shall have all this directly, gentlemen. I—I—listen."

He seized his paper in a terrible hurry; he fidgeted with it, and tried to sort it, but for a long while his trembling hands could not collect the sheets together. At last the reading began.

For the first five minutes the reader's voice continued to tremble, and he read disconnectedly and unevenly; but gradually his voice strengthened, and his expression became firm and regular. Occasionally a rather violent cough stopped him, but his animation grew with the progress of the reading, as did also the disagreeable impression which it made upon his audience,—until it reached the highest pitch of excitement.

Here is the article as he read it—

"My Necessary Explanation.

"*Après moi le déluge.*

"Yesterday morning the prince came to see me. Among other topics of conversation he asked me to come down to his country place. I knew he would come and persuade me to this step, and that he would adduce the argument that it would be easier for me to die 'among people and green trees,'—as he expressed it. But to-day he did not say 'die,' he said 'live.' It is pretty much the same to me in my position—*which* he says. When I asked him why he made such a point of his 'green trees,' he told me, to my astonishment, that he had heard that last time I was in Pavlofsk I had said that I had come 'to have a last look at the trees.'

"When I observed that it was all the same whether one died among trees or in front of a blank brick wall, as here,—and that it was not worth making any fuss over a fortnight, he agreed at once. But he insisted that the good air at Pavlofsk and the green fields would certainly cause a physical change for the better. I remarked to him, with a smile, that he spoke like a naturalist. As he never tells a lie, there must be something in his words. His smile is a pleasant one. I have had a good look at him. I don't know whether I like him or not; and I have no time to waste over the question. The hatred which I felt for him for five months has become considerably modified, I may say, during the last month. Who knows, perhaps I am going to Pavlofsk on purpose to see him. But why do I leave my

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chamber? Wretches who are sentenced to death should not leave their cells. If I had not formed a final resolve upon a certain matter, I should not leave my room, or accept any invitation to come and die at Pavlofsk. I must be quick and finish this explanation before to-morrow. I shall have no time to read it over and correct it, for I must read it to-morrow to the prince and two or three witnesses whom I shall probably find there.

"As this will be absolutely true without a touch of unreality about it, I am curious to see what impression it is likely to make upon me myself at the moment when I read it out. This is my 'last and solemn'—but why do I call it that; there is no question about the truth of it, for it is not worth while lying for the benefit of a fortnight of life; a fortnight of life is not itself worth having, which is a proof that I write nothing here but pure truth.

"*N.B.* Let me remember to consider; am I mad at this moment, or not? or rather at moments? I have been told that consumptives sometimes do go out of their mind for a while at the last stage of the malady. I can prove this to-morrow when I read it out, by the impression it makes upon the audience. I must settle this question once and for all, otherwise I can't go on with anything, or do anything.

"I believe I have just written dreadful nonsense; but there's no time for correcting, as I said before. Besides that I have made myself a promise not to alter a single stroke of what I write in this paper, even though I find that I am contradicting myself every five lines. I wish to verify the working of the natural logic of my ideas to-morrow during the reading, whether I am capable of detecting logical errors, and whether all that I have meditated over during the last six months be true, or nothing but delirium and raving fancies.

"If two months since I had been called upon to leave my room altogether and the view of Meyer's wall opposite, as I am leaving it now, I verily believe it would have been a melancholy parting. But now I have no such feeling, and yet I am leaving this room and Meyer's brick wall *for ever*. So that my conclusion, that it is not worth while indulging in grief, or any other emotion, for a fortnight, has proved stronger than my very nature, and has taken over the direction of my feelings. But is it so? Is it the case that my nature is conquered entirely? If I were to be put on the rack now, I should certainly cry out. I should not say that it is not worth while to yell and feel pain because I have but a fortnight left to live.

"But is it true that I have but a fortnight of life left to me?

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I know I told some of my friends that doctor B. had informed me that this was the case; but I now confess that I lied; doctor B. has not even seen me. However, a week ago, I called in a medical student, Kislorodoff, who is a Nationalist, an Atheist, and a Nihilist, by conviction, and that is why I called him in. I needed a man who would tell me the bare truth without any humbug or ceremony.

"Well he plumped out that I had about a month left me; it might be a little more, he said, under favourable circumstances, but it might also be considerably less. According to his opinion I might die quite suddenly—to-morrow for instance—there had been such cases; only a day or two since a young lady at Colomna who suffered from consumption, and was about on a par with myself in the march of the disease, was just going out to market to buy provisions, when she suddenly felt faint, lay down on the sofa, gasped once, and died.

"Kislorodoff told me all this with a sort of exaggerated devil-may-care negligence, and as though he did me great honour by talking to me so, because it showed that he considered me the same sort of exalted Nihilistic being as himself, to whom death was a matter of no consequence whatever, either way.

"At all events, the fact remained, a month of life and no more. That he is right in his estimation I am absolutely persuaded.

"It puzzles me much to think how on earth the prince guessed yesterday that I see bad dreams. He said to me 'Your agitation and dreams will find relief at Pavlofsk.' Why did he say 'dreams?' Either he is a medical scientist, or else he is a man of exceptional intelligence and wonderful powers of observation. (But that he is an 'idiot' at bottom, of that there can be no doubt whatever.) It so happened that just before he arrived I had a delightful little dream; one of a kind that I have hundreds of just now. I had fallen asleep about an hour before he came in, and dreamed that I was in some room, not my own; it was a large room, well furnished, with a cupboard, chest of drawers, sofa and my bed, a fine wide bed covered with a silken counterpane. But I observed in the room a certain dreadful looking creature, some sort of monster. It was a little like a scorpion, but was not a scorpion, but far more horrible, and especially so, because there are no creatures anything like it in nature, and because it had appeared to me for a purpose and bore within itself some mysterious signification. I looked at the beast well; it was brown in colour and had a shell; it was of the crawling kind of reptiles, about

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eight inches long, and narrowed down from the head, which was about a couple of fingers in width, to the end of the tail which came to a fine point.

"Out of its trunk, about a couple of inches below its head, came two paws at an angle of forty-five, each about a couple of inches long, so that the beast looked like a trident from up above. It had eight hard needle-like whiskers coming out from different parts of its body; it went along like a snake, bending its body about in spite of the shell it wore, and its motion was very quick and very horrible to look at.

"I was dreadfully afraid it would sting me; somebody had told me, I thought, that it was venomous; but what tormented me most of all was the wondering and wondering as to who had sent it into my room, and what was the mystery which I felt it contained.

"It hid itself under the cupboard and under the chest of drawers, and crawled into the corners. I sat down on a chair and kept my legs safely tucked under me. Then the beast crawled quietly across the room and disappeared somewhere near my chair. I looked about for it in terror, but I still hoped that as my feet were safely tucked away the brute would not be able to touch me.

"Suddenly I heard behind me, and about on a level with my head, a sort of rattling sound; I turned sharp round and saw that the brute had crawled up the wall as high as the level of my face, and that its horrible tail, which was moving incredibly fast from side to side, was actually touching my hair! I jumped up—and the brute disappeared. I did not dare lie down on my bed for fear the animal should climb after me and appear under my pillow. My mother came into the room, and some friend of hers. They began to hunt for the reptile and were more composed than I was; they did not seem to be afraid of it. But they did not understand the matter as I did.

"Suddenly the monster re-appeared; he crawled slowly across the room and made for the door, as though with some fixed intention; his slow movement was even more horrible than his quicker motion had been.

"Then my mother opened the door and called my dog, Norma. Norma was a great big beast and had died five years ago.

"She sprang up and stood over the reptile as if she had been turned to stone. The beast stopped too, but its tail and claws still moved about. I believe animals are incapable of feeling supernatural fright—if I have been rightly informed,—

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but at this moment there appeared to me to be something more than ordinary about Norma's terror, as though it must be mystical—supernatural; and as though she felt, just as I did myself, that this reptile was connected with some mysterious secret, and some fatal mystery.

"Norma backed slowly and carefully away from the monster, which followed her in its turn, creeping deliberately after her as though it intended to make a sudden dart upon the dog, all in good time, and sting her.

"In spite of Norma's terror she looked furious and trembled in all her limbs.

"At length she slowly showed her terrible teeth, opened her great red jaws, hesitated—took courage and seized the beast in her mouth.

"The animal seemed to try to dart out of her jaws twice, for Norma caught at it and half swallowed it twice, as it was falling.

"The shell cracked in her teeth; and the tail and claws stuck out of her mouth and shook about in a horrible manner; suddenly Norma gave a piteous whine; the reptile had bitten her tongue.

"Norma opened her mouth wide with the pain, and I saw the beast lying across her tongue, and out of its body, which was almost bitten in two, came a hideous white-looking substance, oozing out into Norma's mouth; it was like the consistency of a crushed black beetle. Just then I awoke and the prince entered the room.

"Gentlemen!" said Hippolyte, breaking off here, "I have not done yet, but it seems to me that I have jotted down a great deal here that is quite unnecessary,—this dream—"

"You have indeed!" said Gania.

"There is too much about myself, I know, but—" as Hippolyte said this his face wore a tired, pained look, and he wiped the sweat off his brow.

"Yes," said Lebedeff, "you certainly have told us a great deal too much of yourself."

"Well—gentlemen—I do not force anyone to listen! If any of you are unwilling to sit it out, please take seats out of hearing—by all means!"

"Hippolyte," said the prince, "give me the document and go to bed like a sensible fellow; we'll have a good talk to-morrow, but you really mustn't go on with this reading; it is not good for you!"

"How can I? how can I?" cried Hippolyte, glaring at him

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in amazement. "Gentlemen! I was a fool to stop reading at all, but I could not help it at the moment—I won't break off again—listen, everyone who wants to!"

He gulped down some water out of a glass standing near, bent quickly over the table, in order to hide his face from the audience, and recommenced his task:

"The idea that it is not worth while living for a few weeks took possession of me a month ago, when I was told that I had four weeks to live, but only partially so at that time. The idea quite over-mastered me three days since.

"Yes, that wall of Meyer's could tell a tale of me if it liked! There was no spot on its dirty blank surface that I did not know by heart. Yes, damn that wall! and yet it is dearer to me than all the Pavlofsk trees!—that is—it *would* be dearer if it were not all the same to me, now!

"I remember now with what hungry interest I began to watch the lives of other people—interest that I had never felt before! I used to wait for Colia's arrival impatiently, for I was so ill myself, then, that I could not leave the house.

"I so threw myself into every little detail of news, and took so much interest in every report and rumour, that I believe I became a regular young gossip!

"I could not understand, among other things, how all these people—with so much life in and before them—do not become *rich*.

"I remember being told of a poor wretch who had died of hunger; the tale caused me to go beside myself with rage! I believe if I could have resuscitated that young fellow I would have done so for the sole purpose of punishing him!

"Occasionally I was so much better that I could go out; but the streets used to put me in such a rage, that I would lock myself up for days rather than go out, even if I were well enough to do so!

"I could not bear to see all those pre-occupied anxious-looking creatures continuously passing and surging along the streets past me! Why were they always anxious? what is the meaning of their eternal care and worry? It is their wickedness, their perpetual detestable malice—that's what it is—they are all bad! bad! bad!

"Whose fault is it that they are all miserable, that they don't know how to live though they have fifty or sixty years of life before them?

"Why did that fool allow himself to die of hunger with sixty years of unlived life before him?

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"And everyone of them shows his hard, working hands, and yells in his wrath: 'Here are we, working like slaves all our lives, and always as hungry as dogs, and there are others who do not work, and are fat and rich!' And side by side with them trots along some wretched fellow who has known better days, doing light porters' work from morn to night for a living, always blubbering and saying that his 'wife died because he had no money to buy medicine with,' and his children dying of cold and hunger, and his eldest daughter gone to the bad, and so on. Oh! I have no pity and no patience for these fools of people. Why can't they be Rothschilds? Whose fault is it that a man has not got millions of money like Rothschild? If he has life, all this must be in his power. Whose fault is it that he does not know how to live his life?

"Oh! it's all the same to me *now—now;* but at that time I could soak my pillow at night with tears of mortification, and tear at my blanket in my rage and fury. Oh, how I longed at that time that they would turn me out—*me*, eighteen years old, poor, half clothed, turn me out into the street, and leave me quite alone, without lodging, without work, without a crust of bread, without relations, without a single acquaintance, in some large town—hungry, beaten (if you like), but in good health—and *then* I would show them—

"What should I show them?

"Oh, don't think that I have no sense of the humiliation. I have suffered already in reading so far. Which of you all does not think me an idiot at this moment—a young fool of eighteen, who knows nothing of life, forgetting that to live as I have lived these last six months is to live longer than the greyhaired old men. Well, let them laugh, and say it is all nonsense, if they please. They may say it is all tales, if they like; and I have spent whole nights telling myself tales. I remember them all now.

"If this 'Explanation' gets into anybody's hands, and they have patience to read it through, let them consider me a madman, if they like, or a schoolboy, or anything; but the fairest name would be—a culprit appointed to die, who thought it only natural to conclude that all men, excepting himself, esteem life far too lightly, live it far too carelessly and lazily, and are, therefore, one and all, unworthy of it. Well, I affirm that my reader is wrong again, for my convictions have nothing to do with my sentence of death. Ask them, ask any one of them, or all of them, how they understand happiness in life?

"But why do I write all this? I feel that all I say is so like

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commonplace that my confession will be taken for a schoolboy exercise—the work of some ambitious lad writing in the hope of his work 'seeing the light;' or perhaps my readers will say that 'I wished to make a statement, but could not develop it for all my sincerity.'

"Let me add to this that in every idea emanating from genius, or even in every serious human idea—born in the human brain—there always remains something—some sediment—which cannot be made over to others though one wrote volumes upon the 'idea,' and lectured upon it for five and thirty years. There is always a something, a remnant, which will never come out from under your shell, but will remain there with you, and you alone, for ever and ever, and you will die, perhaps, without having imparted what may be the very essence of your idea to a single living soul.

"So that if *I* cannot now impart all that has worried me for the last six months, at all events, they will understand that, having myself reached my 'last convictions of life,' I must have paid a very dear price for them. That is what I wished, for reasons of my own, to make a point of in this my 'Explanation.'

"But let me resume.

VI.

'I WILL not deceive you. 'Reality' got me so entrapped in its meshes now and again during the six months past, that I forgot my 'sentence' (or perhaps I did not wish to think of it), and actually busied myself with affairs.

"A word as to my position then. When, eight months since, I became very ill, I threw up all my old connections and dropped all my old companions. As I was always a gloomy, morose sort of individual, my friends easily forgot me; of course, however, they would have forgotten me, all the same, without that circumstance. My position at home was solitary enough. Five months ago I separated my room entirely from those of the family, and no one dared enter mine except at stated times, to clean and tidy it, and so on, and to bring me my dinner. My mother dared not disobey my injunctions; she kept the children quiet, for my sake, and beat them if they dared to make any

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noise and disturb me. I so often complained of them that I should think they must be very fond, indeed, of me by this time. I think I must have tormented 'my faithful Colia' (as I called him) a good deal. He tormented me, too, of late; but I could see that he always bore my temper as though he had given himself a promise to 'spare the poor invalid.' This annoyed me, naturally. Surikoff, who lived above us, annoyed us, too. He was so miserably poor, and I used to prove to him that he had no one to blame but himself for his poverty. I used to be so angry that I think I frightened him eventually, for he stopped coming. He was a most peaceful, humble fellow, was Surikoff. (N.B.—They say that Humility is a terrible power. I must ask the prince about this, for the expression is his.) But I remember one day in March, when I went up to his lodgings to see whether it was true that one of his children had been starved and frozen to death, I began to hold forth to him about his poverty being his own fault, and, in the course of my remarks, I gave a sarcastic laugh while we stood over the body of his little child. Well, the poor wretch's lips began to tremble, and he caught me by the shoulder, and twisted me round to the door. 'Go out,' he said, 'off with you, please!' I went out, of course, and I declare I *liked* it. I liked it at the very moment when I was kicked out of the place. But his words filled me with a strange sort of feeling of disdainful pity for him whenever I thought of them—a feeling which I did not in the least desire to entertain. At the very moment of the insult (for I admit that I did insult him, though I did not mean to), this man could not lose his temper. His lips had trembled, but I swear it was not with rage. He had taken me by the arm, and said 'Off with you!' without the least anger. There was dignity, a great deal of dignity, about him, and it was so inconsistent with the look of him that, I assure you, it was quite comical to see him. But he was not angry. Perhaps he merely began to despise me at that moment.

"Since that time he has always bowed to me on the stairs, whenever I met him, which is a thing he never did before; and he always gets away from me as quickly as he can, as though he felt confused. If he did despise me, at that moment, he must have despised me 'humbly' after his own fashion.

"I daresay he only took his hat off out of fear, as it were, to the son of his creditor; for he always owed my mother money. I thought of having an explanation with him, but I knew that if I did, he would commence to apologise in a minute or two, so I decided to let him alone.

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"Just about that time, that is, the middle of March, I suddenly felt very much better; this continued for a couple of weeks. I used to go out at dusk; I like the dusk, especially in March, when the night frost begins to harden the day's puddles, and the gas is burning.

"Well, one day in the Shestilavochnaya, a man passed me with a paper parcel under his arm. I did not take stock of him very carefully, but he seemed to be dressed in some shabby summer dust-coat, much too light for the season. When he was opposite the lamppost, some ten yards off me, I observed something fall out of his pocket; I hurried forward to pick it up, just in time, for an old wretch in a long kaftán rushed up too; he did not dispute the matter, but glanced at my hand and disappeared.

"It was a large old-fashioned purse, stuffed full; but I guessed, at a glance, that it had anything in the world inside it, excepting money.

"The owner was now some forty yards ahead of me, and was very soon lost in the crowd. I ran after him, and began calling out; but as there was nothing to say excepting 'hey!' he did not turn round. Suddenly he turned into the gate of a house to the left; and when I darted in after him, the gateway was so dark that I could see nothing whatever. It was one of those large houses built for small lodgings, of which there must have been at least a hundred.

"When I entered the yard I thought there must be a man going along on the far right side of it; but it was so dark I could not make out his figure.

"I crossed to that corner and found a dirty dark staircase. I heard a man mounting up above me, some way higher than I was, and thinking I should catch him before his door would be opened to him, I rushed after him. I heard a door open and shut on the fifth storey, as I panted along; the stairs were narrow, and the steps innumerable, but at last I reached the door I thought the right one. Some moments passed before I found the bell and got it to ring.

"An old woman opened the door; she was busy lighting the 'Samovár' in a tiny kitchen; she listened silently to my questions, did not understand a word, of course, and opened another door leading into a little bit of a room, low and scarcely furnished at all, but with a large, wide bed in it, hung with curtains. On this bed lay one Terentich, so the woman called him, drunk, as it appeared to me. On the table was an end of candle in an iron candlestick, and a half-bottle of vodki, nearly

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finished. Terentich muttered something to me, and signed towards the next room. The old woman had disappeared, so there was nothing for me to do but to open the door indicated. I did so, and entered the next room.

"This was a still smaller room than the other, so cramped was it that I could not turn round; a narrow single bed at one side took up nearly all the room; besides the bed there were only three common chairs, and a wretched old kitchen table standing before a small sofa covered with oilcloth. One could hardly squeeze through between the table and the bed.

"On the table, as in the other room, burned a tallow candle end in an iron candlestick; and on the bed there whined a little child of scarcely three weeks old. A pale and ill-looking woman was looking after the child, probably the mother; she looked as though she had not as yet got over the trouble of childbirth, she seemed so weak and was so carelessly dressed. Another child, a little girl of about three years old, lay on the sofa, covered over with what looked like a man's old dress-coat.

"At the table stood a man in his shirt sleeves; he had thrown off his coat; it lay upon the bed; and he was unfolding a blue paper parcel in which were a couple of pounds of bread, and some little sausages.

"On the table along with these things were a few old bits of black bread, and some tea in a pot. From under the bed there protruded an open portmanteau full of bundels of rags. In a word, the confusion and untidiness of the room was indescribable.

"It appeared to me, at the first glance, that both the man and the woman were respectable people, but brought to such a pitch by poverty that untidiness seemed to get the better of every effort to cope with it, and to cause them to take a sort of bitter satisfaction in it, so that it grew day by day and became hopeless. When I entered the room the man who had entered but a moment before me, and was still unpacking his parcels, was saying something to his wife in an excited manner. The news was apparently bad, as usual.

"The man's face seemed to me to be refined and even pleasant. He was dark complexioned, and about twenty-eight years of age; he wore black whiskers, and his lip and chin were shaved. He looked morose, but with a sort of sickly pride of expression. A curious scene was being enacted when I entered.

"There are people who find much satisfaction in their touchy

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feelings, especially when they have just taken the deepest offence; at such moments they feel that they would rather be offended than not. These easily ignited natures, if they are wise, are always full of remorse afterwards when they reflect that they have been ten times as angry as they need have been.

"The gentleman before me gazed at me for some seconds in amazement, and his wife in terror; as though there was something alarmingly extraordinary in the fact that anyone could call in to see them. But suddenly he fell upon me almost with fury; I had had no time to mutter more than a couple of words; but he had doubtless observed that I was decently dressed and, therefore, took deep offence because I had dared enter his den so unceremoniously and spy out the squalor and untidiness of it, which so shamed him.

"Of course he was delighted to get hold of someone upon whom to vent his spleen, and his feeling of rage against things in general for his ill successes.

"For a moment I thought he would assault me; he grew so pale that he looked like a woman about to have a fit of hysterics; his wife was dreadfully alarmed.

"'How dared you come in so; be off!' he shouted, trembling all over with rage and scarcely able to articulate the words. Suddenly, however, he observed his purse in my hand.

"'I think you dropped this,' I remarked, as quietly and drily as I could. (I thought it best to treat him so.) For some while he stood before me in downright terror, and seemed unable to understand what was going on. He then suddenly grabbed at his side pocket, opened his mouth in alarm, and beat his forehead with his hand.

"'My God!' he cried, 'where did you find it? How?' I explained in as few words as I could and as drily as possible how I had seen it and picked it up; how I had run after him, and called out to him, and how I had followed him upstairs and groped my way to his door.

"'Gracious Heaven!' he cried, 'all our papers are inside; my legal documents are in it! My dear sir, you little know what you have done for us. I should have been lost—lost!'

"I had taken hold of the door handle meanwhile, intending to leave the room without reply; but I was panting with my run upstairs, and my agitation came to a climax in a violent fit of coughing, so bad that I could hardly stand.

"I saw how the man dashed about the room to find me an empty chair, how he kicked the rags off a chair which was

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covered up by them, brought me the chair and seated me carefully in it; but my cough went on and did not stop for another three minutes or so. When I came to myself he was sitting by me on another chair, which he had cleared of the rubbish by throwing it all over the floor as he had with mine, and was watching me intently.

"'I'm afraid you are suffering?' he remarked in the tone which doctors put on when they address a patient. 'I am myself a medical man' (he did not say 'doctor'), with which words he waved his hands towards the room and its contents as though in protest at his present condition. 'I see that you—'

"'I have consumption,' I said laconically, rising from my seat.

"He jumped up too.

"'Perhaps you are exaggerating—if you were to take proper measures perhaps—'

"He was terribly confused and did not seem able to collect his scattered senses; the purse was sticking out of his left hand.

"'Oh, don't mind me,' I said. 'Dr. B—— saw me last week' (I lugged him in again), 'and my hash is quite settled; pardon me—' I took hold of the door handle again. I was on the point of opening the door and leaving my grateful but confused and shame-covered medical friend to himself and his squalor, when my damnable cough got hold of me again.

"My doctor insisted on my sitting down again to get my breath; he now said something to his wife who, without leaving her place, addressed a few words of gratitude and courtesy to me. She seemed very shy over it, and her yellow sickly face flushed up with confusion. I remained, but with the evident air of a man who knows he is intruding and is anxious to get away. The doctor's remorse at last seemed to need a vent, I could see it.

"'If I—' he began, breaking off abruptly every other moment, and starting another sentence. 'I—I am so very grateful to you, and I am so much to blame in your eyes, I feel sure, I—you see—' (he pointed to the room again) 'at this moment I am in such a position—'

"'Oh!' I said, 'there's nothing to see; it's quite a clear case—you've lost your place and have come up to make explanations and get your situation back, if you can!'

"'How do you know that?' he asked in amazement.

"'Oh, it was evident at the first glance,' I said ironically, but not intentionally so. 'There are lots of people who come

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up from the provinces like yourself, full of hopes, and run about town, and have to live as best they can.'

"He began to talk at once excitedly and with trembling lips; he commenced complaining, telling me his story; he interested me at once, I confess; I sat there nearly an hour. His story was a very ordinary one. He had been a provincial doctor; he had a civil appointment, and had no sooner taken it up than intrigues began. Even his wife was dragged into these. He was proud, and flew into a passion; there was a change of local government which acted in favour of his opponents; his position was undermined, complaints were made against him; he lost his place and came up to St. Petersburg with his last remaining money, in order to appeal to higher authorities. Of course nobody would listen to him very long at Petersburg; he would come and tell his story one day and be kicked out promptly; another day he would be fed on false promises; next he would be treated harshly; then he would be told to sign some documents; then he would sign the paper and hand it in and they would refuse to receive it, and tell him to hand in a formal petition; in a word he had been driven about from office to office for five months and had spent every farthing he had; his wife's last rags had just been pawned; and meanwhile a child had been born to them and—and 'to-day I have a final refusal to my petition, and I have hardly a crumb of bread left—I have nothing left; my wife has had a baby lately—and I—I—'

"He sprang up from his chair and turned away. His wife was crying in the corner; the child had begun to moan again. I pulled out my note-book and began writing in it. When I had finished and rose from my chair he was standing before me with an expression of alarmed curiosity.

"'I have jotted down your name!' I told him, 'and all the rest of it!—the place you served at, the district, the date, and all. I have a friend, a boy—Bachmatoff, whose uncle is a counsellor of state and has to do with these matters, one Peter Matveyevitch Bachmatoff.'

"'Peter Matveyevitch Bachmatoff!' he cried, trembling all over with excitement, 'why nearly everything depends on that very man!'

"It is a very curious circumstance, this story of the medical man, and the upshot of my visit, and the happy termination, to which I contributed by accident! I told the poor people not to put much hope in me, because I was but a poor schoolboy. (I am not really, I but humiliated myself as

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much as possible in order to make them less hopeful), but that I would go at once to the Vassili Ostroff and see my friend; and that as I knew for certain that his uncle adored him and was absolutely devoted to him as the last hope and branch of the family, perhaps the old man might do something to oblige his nephew.

"'If only they would allow me to explain all to his excellence! if I could but be permitted to tell my tale to him, verbally!' he cried, trembling with feverish agitation, and his eyes flashing with excitement. I repeated once more that I could not hold out much hope—that it would probably end in smoke, and if I did not turn up next morning, he must make up his mind that all was up, and that there was no more to be done in the matter.

"They showed me out with bows and every kind of respect; they seemed quite beside themselves; I shall never forget the expression of their faces!

"I took a droschky and drove over to the Vassili Ostroff at once.

"For some years I had been at enmity with this young Bachmatoff, at school. We considered him an aristocrat, at all events I called him one; he used to dress smartly, and always drove down to school in a private trap; he was a good companion, and was always merry and jolly, sometimes even witty though he was not very intellectual, in spite of the fact that he was always top of the class; I myself was never top in anything!

"All his companions were very fond of him, excepting myself. He had several times during those years come up to me and tried to make friends; but I had always turned sulkily away and refused to have anything to do with him. I had not seen him for a whole year now; he was at the university.

"When, at nine o'clock, or so, this evening I arrived and was shown up to him with great ceremony of announcing and all that, he first received me with astonishment, and not too affably, but he soon cheered up, and suddenly gazed intently at me and burst out laughing.

"'Why, what on earth can have possessed you to come and see *me*, Terentieff?' he cried, with his usual pleasant, sometimes audacious, but never offensive familiarity, which I liked so much in reality, but for which I so detested him. 'Why what's the matter?' he cried in alarm; 'are you so ill as all that?'

"That confounded cough of mine had come on again; I fell

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into a chair, and with difficulty recovered my breath. 'It's all right, it's only consumption!' I said. 'I have come to you with a petition!'

"He sat down in amazement, and I lost no time in telling him the medical man's history; and explained that he, with the influence which he possessed over his uncle, might do some good to the poor fellow.

"'I'll do it—I'll do it, of course!' he said. 'I shall attack my uncle about it to-morrow morning, and I'm very glad you told me the story so well; but how was it that you thought of coming to me about it, Terentieff?'

"'So much depends upon your uncle,' I said. 'And besides we have always been enemies, Bachmatoff; and as you are a generous sort of a fellow, I thought you would not refuse my request because I was your enemy!' I added with irony.

"'Like Napoleon going to England, eh?' cried he, laughing. 'I'll do it though—of course, and at once if I can!' he added, seeing that I rose seriously from my chair at this point.

"And sure enough the matter ended as satisfactorily as matters can go. A month or so later my medical friend was appointed to another place; he got his expenses paid and something to help him to start life with once more. I think Bachmatoff must have persuaded the doctor to accept a loan from himself. I saw Bachmatoff two or three times, about this period, the third time being when he gave a farewell dinner to the doctor and his wife before their departure, a champagne dinner.

"Bachmatoff saw me home after the dinner and we crossed the Nicholai bridge. He told me of his joy, the joyful feeling of having done a good action; he said that it was all thanks to myself that he could feel this satisfaction; and held forth about the foolishness of the theory that an isolated act of virtue is useless and means nothing!

"I, too, was burning to have my say!

"'In Moscow,' I said, 'there was an old state counsellor, a civil general, who, all his life, had been in the habit of visiting the prisons and speaking to criminals. Every party of convicts on its way to Siberia knew beforehand that on the Vorobeef heights the "old general" would pay them a visit. He did all he undertook seriously and devotedly.

"'He would walk down the rows of the unfortunates surrounding him, stop before each individual and ask after his needs—he never sermonised them; he spoke kindly to them—he gave them money; he brought them all sorts of necessaries for the

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journey, and gave them devotional books, choosing those who could read, under the firm conviction that they would read to those who could not, as they went.

"'He scarcely ever talked about the particular crimes of any individual, and hardly listened if any of them volunteered information on that point.

"'All the convicts were equal for him and he made no distinction. He spoke to all as to brothers, and everyone of them looked upon him as a father.

"'When he observed among the exiles some poor woman with a child, he would always come forward and fondle the little one and tickled it to make it laugh. He continued these acts of mercy up to his very death; and by that time all the criminals, all over Russia and Siberia, knew him!

"'A man I knew who had been to Siberia and returned, told me that he himself had been a witness of how the very most hardened criminals remembered the old general, though, in point of fact, he could never, of course, have distributed more than a few pence to each member of a party. Their recollection of him was not sentimental or particularly devoted. Some wretch, for instance, who had been a murderer—cutting the throat of a dozen fellow creatures, for instance; or stabbing six little children for his own amusement (there have been such men!)—would perhaps, without rhyme or reason, suddenly give a sigh and say, "I wonder whether that old general is alive still!" Although perhaps he had not thought of mentioning him for a dozen years before this!'

"I continued in that strain for a long while, pointing out to Bachmatoff how impossible it is to follow up the effects of any isolated good deed one may do, in all its influences and subtle workings upon the heart and after actions of others.

"'And to think that you are to be cut off from life!' remarked Bachmatoff, in a tone of reproach, as though he would like to find some one to pitch into on my account.

"We were leaning over the balustrade of the bridge, looking over into the Neva at this moment.

"'Do you know what has suddenly come into my head?' said I, suddenly—leaning further and further over the rail.

"'Surely not to throw yourself into the river?' cried Bachmatoff in alarm. Perhaps he read my thought in my face.

"'No, not yet. At present nothing but the following mental consideration: you see I have some two or three months left me to live—perhaps four; well, supposing now I have but a month or two more time. I take a fancy for some "good

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deed" that will take both trouble and time, like this business of our doctor friend, for instance: why, I shall have to give up the idea of it and take to something—some *little* good deed, *more within my means*, eh? isn't that an amusing idea!'

"Poor Bachmatoff was much impressed—painfully so, with this sally of mine, and took me all the way home; attempting to console me all the while, and behaving with the greatest judgment and delicacy. On taking leave he pressed my hand warmly and asked permission to come and see me. I replied that if he came to me as a 'comforter,' so to speak (for he would be in that capacity whether he spoke to me himself in a soothing manner or only kept silence, as I pointed out to him), he would but remind me each time of my approaching death! He shrugged his shoulders, but quite agreed with me; and we parted better friends that I had expected.

"But that evening, and that night were sown the first seeds of my 'last conviction.'

"I seized greedily on my new idea; I thirstily drank in all its different aspects (I did not sleep a wink that night!), and the deeper I went into it the more my being seemed to merge itself in it, and the more alarmed I became. A dreadful terror fell over me, at last, and did not leave me all next day.

"Sometimes, thinking over this dreadful idea of mine, I became quite numb with the terror of it; and I might well have deduced from this fact, that my 'last conviction' was eating into my being too fast and too seriously, and would undoubtedly come to its climax before long. And yet for the climax I needed greater determination than I possessed at present.

"However, within three weeks of this, my determination was taken, and the matter was ripe; but all owing to a very strange circumstance.

"Here, on my paper, I make a note of all the figures and dates that come into my explanation. Of course, it is all the same to me, but just *now*—and perhaps only at this very identical moment—I desire that all those who are to judge of my action should see clearly out of how logical a sequence of deductions has at length proceeded my last conviction.

"I have said above that the resolution needed by me for the accomplishment of my final determination came to hand not through any logical sequence of causes, but thanks to a certain strange circumstance which had perhaps no connection whatever with the matter at issue. Ten days since Rogojin called

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upon me upon certain business of his own with which I have nothing to do at present. I had never seen Rogojin before, but had often heard about him.

"I gave him all the information he needed, and he very soon took his departure; so that, since he only came for the purpose of gaining the information which I had given him, the matter might have been expected to end.

"But he interested me too much, and all that day I was under the influence of strange thoughts connected with him, and I determined to return his visit the next day with a personal call.

"Rogojin was evidently by no means pleased to see me, and hinted, delicately, that he saw no reason why our acquaintance should continue. For all that, however, I spent a very curious hour, and so, I daresay, did he. There was so great a contrast between us that I am sure we must both have felt it, anyhow, I felt it acutely. Here was I, with my days numbered, and he—sitting before me—a man in the full vigour of independent life, living in the present, without the slightest thought for 'final deductions,' or numbers of days, or periods of time, or, in fact, for anything but that which—which—well, which he was mad about, if he will excuse me the expression—he may think of me, if he likes, as a feeble author who cannot express his own ideas.

"In spite of his lack of amiability, I could not help seeing in Rogojin a man of intellect and sense; and although, perhaps, there was very little in the outside world which was of interest to him as yet, still he was clearly a man with eyes to see.

"I hinted nothing to him about my 'final conviction,' but it appeared to me that he had guessed it from my words. He remained silent—he is a terribly silent man. I remarked to him, as I rose to depart, that, in spite of the contrast and marked and wide differences between us two, that *les extrémités se touchent*, 'extremes meet,' as I explained to him in Russian; so that maybe he was not as far from my 'final conviction' as appeared.

"His only reply to this was a disagreeable sour grimace; he rose and looked for my cap, and placed it in my hand, and walked me out of the house—that dreadful gloomy house of his—to all appearances, of course, as though I were leaving of my own accord, and he were simply seeing me to the door out of pure politeness. His house impressed me much; it is like a burial-ground; he seems to like it, which is, however, quite natural.

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"Such a full life as he leads is, I should say, so overflowing with immediate and absorbing interest that he has little need of assistance from any surroundings. The visit to Rogojin harassed me terribly. Besides, I had felt ill since the morning; and by evening I was so weak that I took to my bed, and was conscious of high fever at intervals, during which I believe I raved. Colia sat with me until eleven o'clock.

"I remember all we talked about, and every word we said. Whenever my eyes closed for a moment, I could picture nothing to myself but the image of Surikoff just in the act of finding a million roubles. He could not make up his mind what to do with the money, and tore his hair over it. He trembled with fear that somebody would rob him of the money, and at last he decided to bury it all in the ground. I persuaded him that, instead of putting it all away *uselessly* under ground, he had better make a golden coffin out of it for his starved child, and then dig up the little one and put her into the golden coffin. Surikoff accepted this suggestion, I thought, with tears of gratitude, and immediately commenced to carry out my design.

"I thought I spat on the ground and left him in disgust. Colia told me, when I quite recovered my senses, that I had not been asleep for a moment, but that I had spoken to him about Surikoff the whole while.

"At moments I was in a state of dreadful anguish and misery, so that Colia was greatly disturbed when he left me.

"When I arose to lock the door after him, I suddenly called to mind a picture I had noticed at Rogojin's in one of his gloomiest rooms, over the door. He had pointed it out to me himself as we walked past it, and I believe I must have stood a good five minutes in front of it, staring.

"There was nothing artistic about it, but the picture worked strangely and uncomfortably upon me.

"The picture represented Christ just taken down from the cross. It seems to me that painters as a rule represent the Saviour, both on the cross and also taken down from it, with the relics of great beauty still upon His face. This marvellous beauty they strive to preserve to Him even in moments of deepest agony and passion. But there was no such beauty in Rogojin's picture. This was the presentment of a poor mangled body which had evidently suffered unbearable anguish even before its crucifixion, full of wounds, bruises, wales—marks of the violence of soldiers and people, and of the bitterness of the moment when He had fallen with the cross—all

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this combined with evidence of the anguish of the actual crucifixion.

"The face was depicted as though still suffering; as though only just dead was almost quivering with the agony of living under torture. The picture was one of pure nature, for the face was not beautified by the artist, but was left as it would naturally be, whosoever the sufferer, after such anguish as it had just passed through.

"I know that the earliest Christian faith taught that the Saviour suffered *actually* and not figuratively, and that Nature was allowed its own way even while His body was on the cross.

"It is strange to look on this dreadful picture of the mangled corpse of the Saviour, and to put this question to oneself: 'Supposing that the disciples, the future apostles, the women who had followed Him and now stood at the Cross, all of whom believed in and worshipped Him—supposing that they saw this tortured body and face so mangled and bleeding and bruised as here represented (and they *must* have so seen it)—how could they have gazed upon the dreadful sight and yet have believed that He would rise again?'

"The thought steps in, whether one likes it or no, that death is so terrible and so powerful, that even He who conquered nature in His miracles during life was Himself unable to triumph over it at the last. He who called to Lazarus, 'Lazarus come forth!' and the dead man lived—He was now Himself a prey to nature and death. Nature appears to one, looking at this picture, as some huge, implacable, dumb monster; or still better—a stranger simile—some enormous mechanical engine of modern days which has seized and dragged into itself and swallowed up a grand and invaluable Being, a Being which of itself was more worthy than all nature and her laws, and the whole earth, which was perhaps created merely for the sake of the revelation of that Being.

"This blind, dumb, implacable, eternal, unreasoning force is well shown in the picture, and the absolute subordination of all men and things to it is so well expressed that the idea unconsciously merges itself into the understanding of any one who looks at it. All those faithful people who were gazing at the cross and its mutilated occupant must have suffered agony of mind that evening; for they must have felt that all their hopes and almost all their faith had been shattered at a blow. They must have separated in terror and dread that night, though each perhaps carried away with him one great thought which was never eradicated from their minds for ever after-

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wards. If this great Teacher of theirs could predict His own death the day before the Crucifixion, how *could* He have consented to mount the Cross and to die like this in full knowledge of the terrible nature of the death? The same thought comes over the mind of the man who gazes at this picture, no less. I thought of all this by snatches—probably between my attacks of delirium, for an hour and a half or so after Colia's departure.

"Can there be a presentiment of that which has no form? And yet it seemed to me, at certain moments, that I beheld in some strange and impossible form, that deaf, dumb, irresistibly powerful, eternal force.

"I thought someone led me by the hand and showed me, by the light of a candle, a huge, loathsome insect, which he assured me was that very force, that very almighty, dumb, irresistible thing, and laughed at the indignation with which I received this information. In my room they always light the little lamp before my ikon for the night; it gives a feeble little flicker of light over the room; but it is strong enough to see by dimly, and if you sit just under it you can even read by it. I think it was about twelve or a little past, that night; I had not slept a wink, and was lying with my eyes wide open; when suddenly, the door opened, and in came Rogojin.

"He entered, and shut the door behind him. Then he silently gazed at me and went quietly to the corner of the room in which the lamp was burning and sat down almost underneath it.

"I was much surprised and looked at him expectantly.

"Rogojin only leaned over the table and silently stared full at me. So passed two or three minntes, and I recollect that his silence hurt and offended me very much. Why did not he speak?

"That his arrival at this time of night struck me as more or less strange may possibly be the case; but I remember I was by no means amazed at the event. On the contrary, though I had not actually told him my thought in the morning, yet I know he understood it; and this thought was, in its nature, of such a character that it would not be out of the way, at all events, it would not be anything very remarkable, if anyone once coming under its striking influence, were desirous of hearing more of it, and therefore came for further talk at any hour of night, however late.

"I thought he must have come for this purpose.

"In the morning we had parted not the best of friends; I

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remember he looked at me with disagreeable irony once or twice; and this same jeering look I observed in his eyes now—which was the cause of the annoyance I felt against him at the moment.

"I did not for a moment suspect that I was delirious and that this Rogojin was not really Rogojin but the visionary result of fever and excitement. I had not the slightest idea of such a theory at first.

"Meanwhile he continued to sit and stare ironically at me.

"I angrily turned round in my bed and made up my mind that I would not say a word unless he did; so I rested silently on my pillow determined to remain dumb, if it were to last till morning. I felt resolved that he should speak first. Probably twenty minutes or so passed in this way. Suddenly the idea struck me—what if this is an apparition and not Rogojin himself?

"Neither during my illness nor at any previous time had I even seen an apparition;—but I had always thought, both when I was a little boy, and even now, that if I were to see an apparition I should die on the spot,—even though I don't believe in ghosts. And yet *now*, when the idea struck me that this was a ghost and not Rogojin at all, I was not in the least alarmed. Nay—the thought actually irritated me. Strangely enough the decision of the question as to whether this were a ghost or Rogojin, did not, for some reason or other, interest me nearly so much as it ought to have done;—I think I began to muse about something altogether different. For instance, I began to wonder why Rogojin, who had been in dressing-gown and slippers when I saw him at home, had now put on a dress-coat and white waistcoat and tie? I also thought to myself, I remember,—'if this is a ghost, and I am not afraid of it, why don't I approach it and verify my suspicions? Perhaps I *am* afraid—' And no sooner did this last idea enter my head than an icy blast blew over me; I felt a chill down my backbone and my knees shook.

"At this very moment, as though divining my thoughts, Rogojin raised his head from his arm and began to move his lips as though to laugh,—but he continued to stare at me as obstinately as before.

"I felt so furious with him at this moment that I longed to rush at him; but as I had sworn that he should speak first, I continued to lie on my bed,—and the more willingly, that I was still by no means satisfied as to whether it really was Rogojin or not.

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"I cannot remember how long this lasted; I cannot recollect, either, whether my wits forsook me at intervals, or not. But at last Rogojin rose, staring at me as intensely as ever, but not smiling any longer as before,—and walking very softly, almost on tip-toes, to the door, he opened it, went out, and shut it behind him.

"I did not rise from my bed, and I don't know how long I lay on with my eyes open, thinking. I don't know what I thought about, nor how I fell asleep or became insensible; but I awoke next morning after nine o'clock when they knocked at my door. My general orders are that if I don't open the door and call, myself, by nine o'clock, Matreona, the maid, is to come and bring my tea.

"When I now opened the door to her, the thought suddenly struck me, how could he have come in since the door was locked?

"I made inquiries and found that Rogojin could not possibly have come in himself, because all our doors were locked for the night at the time.

"Well, this strange circumstance—which I have described with so much detail—was the ultimate cause which led to my taking my final determination. So that no logic, or logical deductions, had anything to do with my resolve;—it was simply a matter of *disgust*.

"It was impossible to remain under the power of that Life which was full of such detestable, strange, tormenting forms for me.

"This ghost had humiliated me;—nor could I bear to be subordinate to that dark, horrible force which was embodied in the form of the loathsome insect. It was only towards evening, when I had quite made up my mind on this point, that my spirits felt easier.

VII.

"I HAD a small pocket pistol. I had procured it while still a boy, at that droll age when the stories of duels and highwaymen begin to delight one, and when one imagines oneself nobly standing fire before the opponent's pistol at some future day, in one's own duel.

"There were a couple of old bullets kicking about in the bag

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which contained the pistol, and powder enough in an old flask for three shots or so.

"The pistol was a wretched thing, carried very crooked and not further than fifteen paces at the most. However, it would send one's skull flying well enough if you pressed the muzzle of it tight against your temple.

"I have determined to die at Pavlofsk at sunrise, in the park—so as to make no commotion in the house.

"This 'explanation' will make the matter clear enough to the police;—students of psychology and any one else who likes, may make what they please of it. I should not like this paper, however, to be made public. I request the prince to keep a copy himself, and to give a copy to Aglaya Ivanovna Epanchin. This is my last will and testament,—as for my body, I bequeath it to the Medical Academy for the benefit of science.

"I recognise no jurisdiction over myself, and I know that I am now beyond the power of laws and judges.

"A little while ago a very amusing idea struck me; what if I were now to commit some terrible crime,—murder ten fellow-creatures, for instance, or anything else that is thought most shocking and dreadful in this world?—what a dilemma my judges would be in with a criminal who only has a fortnight to live in any case, and now that the rack and other forms of torture are abolished. Why, I should die comfortably in their own hospital—in a warm and clean room, cared for by an attentive doctor, and all,—probably much more comfortably than I should at my own home.

"I don't understand why people in my position do not oftener indulge in such ideas,—if only for a joke! Perhaps they do! who knows!—there are plenty of merry souls among us!

"But though I do not recognise any jurisdiction over myself, still I know that I shall be judged, and that when I am nothing but a voiceless, earless lump of clay; therefore, I do not wish to go before I have left a word of reply—the reply of a free man—not one forced to justify himself,—oh no! I have no need to ask forgiveness of anyone. I wish to say a word merely because I so happen to desire it of my own free will.

"Here, in the first place, comes a strange thought!

"Who, in the name of what Law or Right, would think of disputing my full personal right over the fortnight of life left to me? What jurisdiction can be brought to bear upon the case? Who would wish me, not only to be sentenced, but to

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bear the sentence? Surely there exists no man who would wish such a thing,—why should anyone desire it? for the sake of morality? Well, I can understand that if I were to make an attempt upon my own life while in the enjoyment of full health and vigour—my life which might have been useful to me—etc., etc.—morality might reproach me, according to the old routine, for disposing of my life without permission,—or whatever its tenet may be. But now, *now*, when my sentence is out and my days numbered! what does the prince mean by his absurd 'Pavlofsk trees' to sweeten the last few days of my life? What is the use of all your nature to me—all your parks and trees, your sunsets and sunrises, your blue skies and your self-satisfied faces—when all this wealth of beauty and happiness begins with the fact that it accounts me—only me—one too many! What is the good of all this beauty and glory to me, when every second, every moment—I cannot but be aware that this little fly which buzzes around my head in the sun's setting rays—even this little fly is a sharer and participator in all the glory of the universe, and knows its place and its duty and is happy in it;—while I—only I, am a castaway, and have been blind to the fact hitherto, thanks to my simplicity! Oh! I know well how the prince and others would like me, instead of indulging in all these wicked words of my own, to sing out good-humouredly and to the glory and triumph of morality, that well-known strophe of Millevoix:

'O, puissent voir votre beauté sacrée
Tant d'amis, sourds à mes adieux!
Qu'ils meurent pleins de jours, que leur mort soit pleurée,
Qu'un ami leur ferme les yeux!'

"But believe me, believe me, my simple-hearted friends, that in this highly moral verse, in this academical blessing to the world in general in the French language, is hidden the intensest gall and bitterness; but so well concealed is the venom, that I daresay the poet actually persuaded himself that his words were as the tears of pardon and peace, instead of the bitterness of disappointment and malice, and so died in the delusion.

"Do you know what is the limit of ignominy, beyond which man's consciousness of shame cannot go, and after which begins satisfaction in shame? Well, of course humility is a great force in that sense, I admit that—although that be not the sense in which religion accounts humility to be strength!

"Religion!—I admit eternal Life—and perhaps I always did admit it.

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"Admitted that being—life—is called into existence by the will of a Higher Power; admitted that this life looks out upon the world and says 'I am,' and admitted that the Higher Power wills that the being so called into existence, be suddenly extinguished, for so—for some unexplained reason—it is and must be,—I admit all this;—but then comes the eternal question—*why* must I be humble through all this? why is it not enough that I must be eaten up, without exacting from me humility towards the power that so eats me up? Surely—surely I am not to suppose that somebody—there—will be offended because I do not wish to live out the fortnight term allowed me? I don't believe it.

"It is much simpler and far more worthy to believe that my death is needed—the death of an insignificant atom of life—in order to fulfil the general harmony of the universe,—in order to bring to even some plus or minus in the sum of existence,—etc., etc., just exactly so every day the death of numbers of beings is necessary because without their annihilation the rest cannot live on,—without their fall the rest cannot stand;—although we must admit that the idea is not a particularly grand one in itself!

"However—admit the fact! Admit that without such perpetual devouring of one another the world cannot continue to exist, or could never have been organized—I am ever ready to confess that I cannot understand why this is so—but I'll tell you what I *do* know, for certain:—if I have once been given to understand and realize that *I am*—what business of mine is it that the world is organized on a system full of errors and that otherwise it cannot be organized at all? Who will or can judge me after this? Say what you like—the thing is impossible and unjust!

"And meanwhile I have never been able, in spite of my great desire to do so, to persuade myself that there is no future existence, and no Providence above us.

"The fact of the matter is that all this *does* exist, but that we know absolutely nothing about the future life and its laws!

"But if it is so difficult—and even absolutely impossible to understand, surely I am not to be answerable because I could not fathom the incomprehensible?

"Of course I know they say that one must be obedient, and of course, too, the prince is one of those who say so: that one must be obedient without questions, out of pure goodness of heart, and that for my worthy conduct in this matter I shall meet with reward in another world. We humiliate Providence

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by attributing to it our own comprehension, our own little private way of looking at things, out of annoyance that we cannot fathom the ways of Providence itself.

"Again I repeat, I cannot be answerable because I am unable to understand the difficulties which it is not given to mankind to fathom.

"And if so, why am I to be judged because I could not comprehend the actual Will and Laws of Providence? No, we had better drop religion.

"And enough of this.

"Assuredly by the time I have got so far in the reading of my document the sun will be up and the huge force of the living world will be about and active in his rays. Let them be. I shall die gazing straight at the great Fountain of all life and power, and shall not wait for the life it gives.

"If I had but the power to prevent my own birth I should certainly never consent to accept existence under such ridiculous conditions. However, I have the power to end my existence, although I do but lay down that which is already numbered and sentenced to annihilation. It is an insignificant power, and my revolt is equally insignificant.

"Final explanation: I die, not in the least because I am unable to support these next three weeks. Oh, no, I should find strength enough, and if I wished it I should feel soothed by the very reflection that I had voluntarily accumulated offence and overcome it. But I am not a French poet, and I do not require such consolation; and finally, nature has so limited my capacity for work or activity of any kind, in allotting me but three weeks of time, that suicide is about the only thing left that I can begin and end in the time, of my own free will.

"Perhaps then I am anxious to take advantage thus of my last chance of doing something for myself. Protest is at times no insignificant thing."

The explanation was finished; Hippolyte paused at last.

There is, in extreme cases, a final stage of cynical candour when a nervous man, excited and beside himself with agitation self caused, will be afraid of nothing and ready for any sort of scandal, nay, glad of it.

The extraordinary, almost unnatural tension of the nerves which upheld Hippolyte up to this point, had now arrived at this final stage. This poor feeble boy of eighteen—exhausted by disease—looked for all the world as weak and frail as a leaflet torn from its parent tree and trembling in the breeze; but no sooner had his eye swept over his audience, for the

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first time during the whole of the last hour, than the most contemptuous, the most haughty expression of disgust lighted up his face and smile. He defied them all, as it were. But his hearers were indignant, too; they rose to their feet with cries of annoyance and dislike. Fatigue, the wine consumed, the strain of listening so long, all added to the disagreeable and "nasty" (so to speak) impression which the reading had made upon them.

Suddenly Hippolyte jumped up from his sofa, just as though he had been shot:

"The sun is rising," he yelled, seeing the gilded tops of the trees, and pointing them out to the prince, "see, it is rising now."

"Well, what then? did you suppose it wasn't going to rise?" asked Ferdishenko.

"It's going to be hot again all day," said Gania, with an air of annoyance, and taking his hat. "A month of this will dry us all up; are you coming home, Ptitsin?"

Hippolyte listened to this in amazement, almost amounting to numbness; suddenly he became deadly pale and shuddered.

"You manage your composure too awkwardly. I see you wish to insult me," he cried to Gania. "You—you are a scamp!" he looked at Gania with an expression of reproachful malice.

"What on earth is the matter with the boy? what a phenomenal condition of feeble-mindedness."

"Oh, he's simply a fool," said Gania.

Hippolyte braced himself up a little.

"I understand, gentlemen," he began, trembling as before, and stumbling over every word, "that I have deserved your spite and—and am sorry that I should have annoyed you with this raving nonsense of mine (pointing to his article), and, meanwhile, I am sorry that I have not annoyed you enough after all," he smiled, feebly. "Have I annoyed you, Evgenie Pavlovitch?" he suddenly turned on Evgenie with this question; "tell me now, have I annoyed you or not? Say the word."

"Well, it was a little drawn out, perhaps; but—"

"Come, speak out, don't lie for once in your life—speak out," continued Hippolyte, all quivering and shaking with agitation.

"Oh, my good sir, I assure you it's entirely the same to me. I don't take the least interest in the matter, one way or another; you may as well leave us in peace," said Evgenie angrily, turning his back on him.

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"Good night, prince," said Ptitsin, approaching his host.

"What are you thinking of? don't go, he'll blow his brains out in a minute," cried Vera Lebedeff, rushing up to Hippolyte and catching hold of his hands in a torment of anxiety and alarm. "What are you thinking of? he said he would blow his brains out at sun-rise."

"Oh, *he* won't shoot himself," cried several voices, sarcastically.

"Gentlemen, you'd better look out," cried Colia, also seizing Hippolyte by the hand, "just look at him, prince; prince, what are you thinking of?" Vera and Colia, and Keller, and Burdofsky, were all crowding round Hippolyte now and holding him down.

"Excuse me, prince, but what are your arrangements?" asked Lebedeff, tipsy and exasperated.

"What do you mean by 'arrangements'?"

"No, no, excuse me. I'm master of this house, though I do not wish to lack respect towards yourself, prince; you are master of the house too, in a way; but I can't allow this sort of thing to go on in my own house, though it may be let to you for a season, no, no."

"He won't shoot himself, the boy is only playing the fool," said General Ivolgin, suddenly and unexpectedly.

"I know he won't, I know he won't, general; but I—I'm master here."

"Listen, Mr. Terentieff," said Ptitsin, who had bidden the prince "good-night" and was now holding out his hand to Hippolyte, "I think you remark in that copy-book of yours, that you bequeath your skeleton to the Academy. Are you referring to *your* skeleton, your *own* skeleton, I mean, your very bones?"

"Yes, my bones, I—"

"Quite so, I see; because, you know, little mistakes have occurred now and then; there was just such a case—"

"Why do you tease him," cried the prince, suddenly.

"You've moved him to tears," added Ferdishenko.

But Hippolyte was by no means weeping. He was about to move from his place, when his four guards rushed at him and seized his hands once more. There was a laugh at this.

"He led up to this on purpose. He took the trouble of filling that copy-book there so that people should come and grab him by the arm," observed Rogojin.

"Good night, prince, what a time we've sat here, my very bones ache!"

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"If you really intended to shoot yourself, Terentieff," said Evgenie Pavlovitch, laughing, "if I were you, after all these compliments, I should just *not* shoot myself in order to snub them all."

"They are very anxious to see me blow my brains out," said Hippolyte, as though musing.

"Yes, they'll be awfully annoyed if they don't see it."

"Then you think they won't see it?"

"I am not trying to egg you on. On the contrary, I think it very likely that you may shoot yourself; but the principal thing is, keep cool," said Evgenie with a drawl, and with great condescension.

"I only now perceive what a terrible mistake I made, in reading this article to them," said Hippolyte, suddenly, addressing Evgenie and looking at him with an expression of so much trust and confidence that he seemed as though he were applying to a friend for friendly counsel.

"Yes, it's a droll situation; I really don't know what advice to give you," replied Evgenie, laughing. Hippolyte gazed steadfastly at him, but said nothing. To look at him anyone might suppose that he was perfectly unconscious at intervals.

"Excuse me, excuse me," said Lebedeff, "but did you observe the young gentleman's style; 'I'll go and blow my brains out in the park,' says he, 'so as not to disturb anyone.' He thinks he won't disturb anybody if he goes three yards away, into the park, and blows his brains out there."

"Gentlemen—" began the prince.

"No, no, excuse me, most revered sir," Lebedeff interrupted excitedly, "since you must have observed yourself that this is no joke, and since at least half your guests must also have concluded that after all that has been said this youth *must* blow his brains out for honour's sake—I—as master of this house, and before these witnesses, have the honour to give notice that I invite you hereby to take steps."

"Yes, but what am I to do, Lebedeff? How am I to assist you? I am ready."

"I'll tell you. In the first place he must immediately deliver up the pistol which he boasted of, with all its appurtenances; if he does this I shall consent to his being allowed to spend the night in this house—considering his feeble state of health, and of course conditionally upon his being under proper supervision on my part. But to-morrow he must go where he likes—excuse me, prince. Should he refuse to deliver up his weapon, then I shall instantly take one of his hands and

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General Ivolgin the other, and we shall hold him until the police arrive and take the matter into their own hands. Mr. Ferdishenko will kindly fetch them, being on terms with the authorities there."

At this there was a dreadful noise; Lebedeff danced about in his excitement; Ferdishenko prepared to go for the police; Gania blandly insisted that it was all nonsense, "for nobody was going to shoot themselves." Evgenie Pavlovitch said nothing.

"Prince," whispered Hippolyte, suddenly, his eyes all ablaze, "you surely don't suppose that I did not foresee all this hatred," he looked at the prince as though he expected him to reply, for a moment. "Enough," he added at length, and addressing the whole company almost in a yell, he cried, "it's all my fault, gentlemen; Lebedeff, here's the key" (he took out a small bunch of keys), "this one, last but one—Colia will show you—Colia, where's Colia?" he cried, looking straight at Colia and not seeing him. "Yes, he'll show you; he packed the bag with me this morning. Take him up, Colia; my bag is upstairs in the prince's study, under the table. Here's the key, and in the little case you'll find my pistol, and flask, and powder, and all. Colia packed it all himself, Mr. Lebedeff, he'll show you; but it's on condition that to-morrow morning, when I leave for Petersburg, you will give me back my pistol, do you hear? I do this for the prince's sake, not yours."

"Capital, that's much better!" cried Lebedeff, and seizing the key he made off in hot haste.

Colia stopped a moment as though he wished to say something; but Lebedeff dragged him away.

Hippolyte looked around at the laughing guests. The prince observed that his teeth were chattering as though under a violent attack of ague.

"What brutes they all are," he whispered to the prince; whenever he addressed the prince he bent and whispered.

"Let them alone, you're too weak now—"

"Yes, directly; I'll go away directly. I'll—"

Suddenly he embraced the prince.

"Perhaps you think I am mad, eh?" he asked him, laughing very strangely.

"No, but you—"

"Directly, directly. Stand still a moment, I wish to look in your eyes; don't speak—stand so—let me look at you; I am bidding farewell to mankind."

He stood so for ten seconds, gazing at the prince, motionless, deadly pale, his temples wet with perspiration; he held the

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prince's hand strangely tight, as though afraid he would break away and make off.

"Hippolyte, Hippolyte, what is the matter with you?" cried the prince.

"Directly; there, that's enough. I'll lie down directly. I shall drink just one drop to the sun's health; I wish to—I insist upon it; let go."

He seized a glass from the table, broke away from the prince and in a moment was standing at the balcony door.

The prince made after him, but it so happened that at this very moment Evgenie Pavlovitch stretched out his hand to say "good-night." A moment passed, and there was a general cry from those assembled on the balcony. Next came a moment of indescribable agitation, for this is what had happened:

Reaching the balcony door, Hippolyte had paused, holding the goblet up in his left hand while he put his right hand into his coat pocket.

Keller insisted afterwards that he had held his right hand in his pocket all the while, when he was speaking to the prince, and that he had held the latter's shoulder with his left hand only; this circumstance, Keller affirmed, had led him to feel some suspicion from the first. However this may be, Keller had certainly followed Hippolyte to the door, but he was too late.

He only caught sight of something flashing in Hippolyte's right hand, and almost the same instant he saw that it was a pistol, and that the pistol was pressed tight to the former's temple.

Keller rushed at him, but at that very instant Hippolyte pulled the trigger.

There followed the sharp metallic snap of the cock on the nipple of the pistol, but no report.

When Keller seized the would-be suicide, the latter fell forward into his arms, probably actually believing that he was shot. Keller had hold of the pistol now. Hippolyte was immediately seized and placed on a chair, while the whole company thronged around excitedly, talking and asking each other questions.

Everyone of them had heard the pistol snap, and yet they saw a live and apparently unharmed man before them.

Hippolyte himself sat still quite unconscious of what was going on, and gazed around with a senseless expression of face.

Lededeff and Colia came rushing in at this moment.

"What is it?" they asked, breathlessly,—"a miss fire?"

"Very likely it wasn't even loaded," said several voices.

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"No—it's loaded all right," said Keller, examining the pistol, "but—"

"What! miss fire?"

"There wasn't a cap on," observed Keller.

It would be difficult to describe the pitiable scene that now followed.

The first sensation of alarm very soon began to give place to amusement and laughter; some burst out laughing loud and heartily, and seemed to find much malicious satisfaction in the joke. Poor Hippolyte sobbed hysterically; he wrung his hands; he approached every one in turns—even Ferdishenko, and took them by both hands, and swore solemnly that he had forgotten,—"absolutely forgotten—accidentally, and not on purpose,"—to put a cap on,—that he "had ten of them, at least, in his pocket." Here he pulled them out and showed them round to everyone in the room; he protested that he "had not liked to put one on beforehand for fear of an accidental explosion" in his pocket. That he had thought he would have lots of time to put one on afterwards—when required—and, that, in the heat of the moment, he had forgotten all about it. He threw himself upon the prince, then on Evgenie Pavlovitch. He entreated Keller to give him back the pistol, and he'd soon show them all, there, that his honour,—his honour,—but he was dishonoured, now, for ever!

He fell senseless at last—there was no mistake about his unconsciousness; and he was carried off into the prince's study.

Lebedeff, now quite sobered down, sent for a doctor; and he and his daughter with Burdofsky and General Ivolgin, remained by the sick man's couch.

When he was carried out Keller stood in the middle of the balcony, and made the following declaration, addressed to the company in general, and spoken in a loud tone of voice with emphasis upon each word uttered.

"Gentlemen, if any one of you casts any doubt again, aloud, and before me, upon Hippolyte's good faith, or hints that the cap was forgotten intentionally, or suggests that this unhappy boy was acting a part before us, I beg to announce that the person so speaking shall account to me for his words."

No one replied to this declaration of war.

The company departed very quickly, in a mass. Ptitsin, Gania, and Rogojin went away together.

The prince was much astonished that Evgenie Pavlovitch had changed his mind, and took his departure without the conversation he had requested.

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"Why, you wished to have a talk with me when the others left?" he said.

"Quite so," said Evgenie, sitting down, suddenly, and seating the prince beside him, "but I have changed my mind for the time being. I confess, my mind is a little too disturbed, and so, I may say, is yours; and the matter as to which I wished to consult you is too serious to tackle with one's mind ever so little disturbed; too serious both for myself and for you too. You see, prince, for once in my life I wish to perform an absolutely honest action, that is, an action with no selfish afterthought about it; and I think my mind is hardly in a condition for it just at this moment. You, too, are not quite composed, I daresay, and—and—well, we'll have it all out afterwards. Perhaps the matter may gain in clearness—I mean perhaps both you and I will see through the matter better in two or three days,—just the two or three days which I must spend in St. Petersburg now."

Here he rose again from his chair, so that it seemed strange that he should have thought it worth while to sit down at all.

The prince thought, too, that Evgenie Pavlovitch looked vexed and annoyed, and not nearly so friendly towards himself as he had been earlier in the night.

"I suppose you will go to the sufferer's bedside now, eh?" he added.

"No, I'm afraid," began the prince.

"Oh, you needn't fear! he'll live another six weeks all right; very likely he will recover altogether, but I strongly advise you to pack him off to-morrow."

"I think I may have offended him by saying nothing just now, you see. I am afraid he may suspect that I have my doubts as to his good faith,—about shooting himself, you know. What do you think, Evgenie Pavlovitch?"

"Not a bit of it! You are much too good to him; you shouldn't care a hang about what he thinks. I have heard of such a man as he is before, but never came across one till to-night,—a man who can actually shoot himself in order to gain a vulgar notoriety, or blow out his brains all the same for rage, if he finds that people don't care to pat him on the back for his sanguinary intentions. But what astonishes me more than anything, is the fellow's candid confession of weakness. You'd better kick him out to-morrow in any case."

"Do you think he will make another attempt?"

"Oh, no, not he, not now. But you have to be very careful with this sort of gentleman. Crime is too often the last

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resource of hungry, petty insignificance like his. You'll see this young fellow is quite capable of cutting the throats of ten people, simply for a lark, exactly like that wretch he told us of in his explanation. I assure you those confounded words of his will not let me sleep to-night."

"I think you disturb yourself too much on that score."

"What an extraordinary fellow you are, prince; do you mean to say that you doubt the fact that he is capable of murdering ten men *now*?"

"I daren't say one way or the other; all this is very strange —but—"

"Well, do as you like, do just as you like," said Evgenie Pavlovitch, irritably. "Only you are such a plucky fellow, take care you don't get yourself included among the ten victims."

"Oh, he is much more likely not to kill any one at all," said the prince, gazing thoughtfully at Evgenie. The latter laughed disagreeably.

"Well, *au revoir;* did you observe that he 'willed' a copy of his confession to Aglaya Ivanovna?"

"Yes, I did; I am thinking of it."

"What, in connection with 'the ten,' eh?" laughed Evgenie, as he left the room.

An hour later, towards four o'clock, the prince went into the park. He had endeavoured to fall asleep at home but could not, owing to the painful beating of his heart.

He had left things all quiet and comfortable there; the sick man was fast asleep, and the doctor, who had been called in, had stated that there was no special danger in his case.

Lebedeff, Colia, and Burdofsky were lying down in the sick-room, ready to take it in turns to watch the invalid.

There was nothing to fear, therefore, at home.

But the prince's mental perturbation increased every moment. He wandered about the park, looking absently around him, and paused in astonishment when he suddenly found himself in the empty space with the rows of chairs round it and the musician's bower, near the Vauxhall. The look of the place struck him forcibly, it seemed such a dreadful place now; so he turned round and went along by the path which he had followed with the Epanchins on their way to the orchestra until he reached the green bench which Aglaya had pointed out for their rendezvous. He sat down on it and suddenly burst into a loud fit of laughter, immediately followed by a burst of irritation. His anguish and disturbance of mind continued; he

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felt that he must go, somewhere, anywhere, he did not know whither.

Above his head some little bird sang out, of a sudden; he began to peer about for it among the leaves. Suddenly the bird darted out of the tree and away, and instantly he thought of the "fly buzzing about in the sun's rays" that Hippolyte had talked of; how that it knew its place and was a participator in the universal life and work going on around, while he alone was an "outcast." This picture had impressed him at the time, and he meditated upon it now. An old forgotten memory began to develop in his brain, and suddenly burst into clearness and light. It was a recollection of Switzerland, during the first year of his cure, during the very first months. At that time he had been pretty nearly an idiot still, he could not speak properly, and had the greatest difficulty in understanding when others spoke to him. He once climbed the hill, one fine sunny morning, and wandered long and aimlessly with a certain thought which *would* work and worry in his brain, but would not take root. Before him was the blazing sky, below his feet, the lake; all around was the horizon, clear and infinite. He looked out upon this, long and fretfully. He remembered now how he had stretched out his arms towards the beautiful, boundless blue of the horizon, and wept, and wept. What had so tormented him was the idea that he was a stranger to all this.

What was this lovely universe? what was this grand, glorious, eternal Rest to which he had yearned from his childhood up, and which he could never reach or touch? Every morning just such a magnificent sun rose; every morning the rainbow hung out over the waterfall.

Every little fly that buzzed in the sun's rays was a singer in the universal chorus, knew its place and work, loved it and was happy. Every blade of grass grew on and was happy. Everything knew its place and loved it, went forth with a song and returned with a song; only he knew nothing, understood nothing, neither men nor bird-calls, nor any of nature's voices; he was a stranger and an outcast.

Oh, he could not then speak these words, or express all he would fain ask; he had worried and tormented himself dumbly; but now it appeared to him that he *must* have said these very words—even then—and that Hippolyte must have taken his picture of the little fly from his tears and cries of that very time.

He was sure of it, and his heart beat excitedly over the thought, he knew not why.

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He feel asleep on the bench; but his mental disquiet continued through his slumbers.

Just before he dozed off the idea of Hippolyte murdering ten men flitted through his brain, and he smiled at the absurdity of such a thought.

Around him all was beautiful and quiet, only the flutter and whisper of the leaves broke the silence, but broke it only to cause it to appear yet more deep and still.

He dreamed many dreams as he sat, and all were full of disquiet; so that he shuddered every moment.

At length a woman seemed to approach him. He knew her, oh! he knew her only too sadly well; he could always name her and indicate her among others; but, strange, she seemed to have quite a different face from her own, as he had known it, and he felt a tormenting desire to be able to say she was not that other woman. In the face before him there was such dreadful remorse and horror that he thought she must undoubtedly be a terrible criminal, and that she must have just committed some awful crime.

Tears were trembling on her white cheek. She beckoned him with her hand, but placed her finger on her lip as though to warn him that he must follow her very quietly. His heart froze within him; he wouldn't, he *couldn't* confess her to be a criminal, and yet he felt that something dreadful would happen the next moment, something which should blast his whole life.

She seemed to wish to show him something, not far off, here, in the park.

He rose from his seat in order to follow her when a fresh, bright, clear peal of laughter rang out by his side; somebody's hand suddenly appeared in his own; he seized it, pressed it hard, and awoke. Before him stood Aglaya, laughing loud.

VIII.

SHE laughed, but she was rather angry too.

"He's asleep; you were asleep," she said, with contemptuous surprise.

"Is it really you?" muttered the prince, not quite himself as yet, and recognising her with a start of amazement. "Oh, yes, of course," he added, "this is our rendezvous; I fell asleep here."

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"So I saw."

"Did no one awake me besides yourself? Was there no one else here? I thought there was another woman."

"There was another woman here."

At last he was wide awake.

"It was a dream, of course, and nothing more," he said, musingly; "how strange that I should have a dream like that at such a moment. Sit down—"

He took her hand and seated her on the bench; he sat down beside her and reflected.

Aglaya did not begin the conversation, but contented herself with staring intently at her neighbour.

He stared back at her, but at times it was clear that he did not see her and was not thinking of her.

Aglaya began to flush up.

"Oh, yes," cried the prince, shuddering; "Hippolyte's suicide—"

"What? at your house?" she asked, but without much surprise. "He was alive yesterday evening, wasn't he? How could you sleep here after all that?" she cried, growing suddenly animated.

"Oh, but he didn't kill himself, the pistol didn't go off."

Aglaya insisted on hearing the whole story in all its details. She hurried the prince along every moment, but interrupted him herself with all sorts of questions, nearly all of which were indirect. Among other things, she seemed greatly interested in every word that Evgenie Pavlovitch said, and made the prince repeat that part of the story over and over again.

"Well, that'll do, we must go on quick," she concluded, after hearing all; "we have only an hour here, till eight; I must be home by then without fail, so that they may not find out that I came and sat here with you; but I've come on business. I have a great deal to say to you. But you have bowled me over considerably with your news. As to Hippolyte, I think his pistol was quite right not to go off, it was more consistent with the whole affair. Are you sure he really wished to blow his brains out, and that there was no humbug about the matter?"

"No humbug at all."

"Very likely. So he wrote that you were to bring me a copy of his confession, did he? Why didn't you bring it?"

"Why, he didn't die. I'll ask him for it, if you like."

"Bring it by all means; you needn't ask him. He will be delighted, you may be sure; for in all probability, he shot at

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himself simply in order that I might read his confession. Don't laugh at what I say please, Lef Nicolaievitch, because it may very well be the case."

"I'm not laughing. I am convinced, myself, that that may be partly the reason for his act."

"You are convinced? you don't really mean to say you think that honestly?" asked Aglaya, extremely surprised.

She put her questions very quickly and talked fast, every now and then forgetting what she had begun to say and not finishing her sentence; she seemed to be impatient to warn the prince about something or other every moment; she was in a state of unusual excitement and flurry, and though she had put on a brave and even defiant air she seemed to be rather alarmed, for unknown reasons. She was dressed very simply indeed, but this suited her. She continually trembled and blushed, and she sat at the very edge of the seat.

The fact that the prince confirmed her idea about Hippolyte shooting himself that she might read his confession impressed her powerfully.

"Of course," added the prince, "he wished us all to applaud his conduct—besides yourself."

"How do you mean—applaud?"

"Well—how am I to explain—he was very anxious that we should all come around him, and say we were so sorry for him, and that we loved him very much, and all that; and that we hoped he wouldn't kill himself, but remain alive. Very likely he thought more of you—he had you more in view—than the rest of us, because he thought of you at such a moment, though perhaps he did not know himself that he had you in his mind's eye."

"I don't understand you. How could he have me in view, and not be aware of it himself? And yet, I don't know—perhaps I do. You know I have intended to poison myself at least thirty times—ever since I was thirteen or so—and to write to my parents before I did it. I used to think how nice it would be to lie in my coffin, and have them all weeping over me and saying it was all their fault for being so cruel, and all that—what are you smiling at?" she added, knitting her brow. "What do *you* think about when you go mooning alone all over the place? I suppose you imagine yourself a field-marshal, and think you have knocked Napoleon on the head, eh?"

"Well, I really have thought something of the sort now and then, especially when dozing," laughed the prince.

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"I don't wish to joke with you, Lef Nicolaievitch; I shall see Hippolyte myself—tell him so. As for you, I think you are behaving very badly, because it is not right to judge a man's soul as you are judging Hippolyte's. You have no gentleness about you; you are unfair."

The prince reflected.

"No, I think *you* are unfair towards me," he said. "There is nothing wrong in the thoughts I ascribe to Hippolyte; they are only natural. But of course I don't know for certain what he thought; perhaps he thought nothing, but simply longed to see human faces once more, and to hear human praise and feel human affection. Who knows? only it all came out wrong, somehow. Some people have luck, and everything comes out right with them; others have none, and never a thing turns out fortunately."

"I suppose you have felt that in your own case," said Aglaya.

"Yes, I have," replied the prince, quite unsuspicious of any irony in the remark.

"H'm—well, at all events, I shouldn't have fallen asleep here, in your place; it wasn't nice of you, that. I suppose you fall asleep wherever you sit down?"

"But I didn't sleep a wink all night. I walked and walked about, and went to the music platform—"

"What musical platform?"

"Where they played last night; then I found this bench and sat down, and thought and thought—and at last I fell fast asleep."

"Oh, is that it? That makes a difference in your favour, of course. What did you go to the music place for?"

"I don't know; I—"

"Very well—afterwards; you are always interrupting me. What woman was it you were dreaming about?"

"It was—about—you saw her—"

"Quite so; I understand. I understand wonderfully well. You are very— Well, how did she appear to you? what did she look like? No, I don't want to know anything about her," said Aglaya, angrily; "don't interrupt me—"

She paused a moment as though getting breath, or trying to master her feeling of annoyance.

"Look here; this is what I called you here for. I wish to make you a proposal—to be my friend. What do you stare at me like that for?" she added, almost angrily.

The prince certainly had darted a rather piercing look at

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her at the moment, and now observed that she had begun to blush violently. At such moments, the more Aglaya blushed, the angrier she grew with herself for it; and this was clearly expressed in her eyes, which flashed like fire. As a rule, she very soon emptied out her wrath on her unfortunate companion, be it who it might. She knew her failings, and was not nearly so talkative as her sisters for this reason—in fact, at times she was much too quiet.

When therefore, and especially at such delicate moments as this, she was bound to talk, she invariably did so with an air of haughty defiance. She always knew beforehand when she was going to blush, long before the blush came.

"Perhaps you do not wish to accept my proposal?" she asked, gazing haughtily at the prince.

"Oh yes, I do; but it is so unnecessary. I mean, I did not think one need make such a proposal," said the prince, looking confused.

"What did you suppose then? Why did you think I invited you out here? I suppose you think me a 'little fool,' as they all call me at home?"

"I didn't know they called you a fool. *I* certainly don't—think you one."

"You don't think me one. Oh, dear me!—that's very clever of you; you put it so neatly, too."

"In my opinion, you are far from a fool sometimes—in fact, you are very intelligent. You said a very clever thing just now."

Aglaya blushed with pleasure. All these changes in her expression came about so naturally and so rapidly—they delighted the prince; he watched Aglaya, and laughed for joy.

"Listen," she began again; "I have long waited to tell you all this, ever since the time when you sent me that letter—even before that. Half of what I have to say you heard yesterday. I consider you the most honest and upright of men—more honest and upright than any other man; and if any body says that your intellect is—that your wits are sometimes affected, you know—it is unfair. I always say so and uphold it, because even if your surface intellect be a little affected (of course you will not feel angry with me for talking so—I am speaking in all good faith), yet your real intellect is *far* better than all theirs together. Such an intellect as they have never even *dreamed* of, because you have, as it were, *two* intellects—a real one and an unreal one. Isn't it so?"

"May be! may be so!" said the prince, faintly; his heart was beating painfully.

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"I knew you would not misunderstand me," she said, triumphantly. "Prince S. and Evgenie Pavlovitch and Alexandra don't understand anything about your double intellect, and, just fancy, mamma does."

"You are very like Lizabetha Prokofievna."

"What! surely not," said Aglaya.

"Yes you are, indeed."

"Thank you; I am very glad to be like mamma," she said, thoughtfully. "You are very fond of her, aren't you?" she added, quite unconscious of the naiveness of the question.

"Very, very fond of her; and I am so glad that you have realized the fact."

"I am very glad you like her, because she is so often laughed at by people. But listen to the chief point. I have long thought over the matter, and at last I have chosen you. I don't wish people to laugh at me; I don't wish people to think me a 'little fool.' I don't want to be chaffed. I felt all this of a sudden, and I refused Evgenie Pavlovitch flatly, because I am not going to be for ever thrown at people's heads to be married. I want—I want—well, I'll tell you, I wish to run away from home, and I have chosen you to help me."

"Run away from home?" cried the prince.

"Yes—yes—yes! run away from home!" she repeated, in a transport of rage. "I won't, I *won't* be made to blush every minute by them all. I don't want to blush before Prince S. and Evgenie Pavlovitch or anyone else, and therefore I have chosen you. I shall tell you everything, *everything*, even the most important things of all, whenever I like, and you are to hide nothing from me on your side.

"I wish to speak to at least *one* person, as I would to my own self. They have suddenly begun to say that I am waiting for you, and in love with you. They began this before you arrived, and so I didn't show them the letter, and now they all say it, every one of them. I want to be brave and be afraid of nobody. I don't wish to go to their balls and things—I want to do good. I have long desired to run away, for I have been kept shut up there for twenty years, and they are always trying to marry me off. I wanted to run away when I was fourteen years old—I was a little fool then, I know—but now I have counted it all up and reckoned it out, and I have waited for you to tell me all about foreign countries. I have never seen a single Gothic cathedral. I must go to Rome; I must see all the studios; I must study in Paris; all this last year I have been preparing and reading books. Alexandra and

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Adelaida are allowed to read anything they like, but I mayn't; it's considered shameful for *me*. I don't want to quarrel with my sisters, but I told my parents long ago that I wish to change my social position. I have decided to take up my own education under your advice, because you said you loved children. Can we go in for education together—if not at once, then afterwards? We'll do good together. I don't want to be a fashionable lady any more—I won't be a general's daughter. Tell me, are you a *very* learned man?"

"Oh, no; not at all."

"Oh-h-h! I'm sorry for that. I thought—I wonder why I always thought—but at all events you'll direct me, won't you, because I've chosen you, you know."

"Aglaya Ivanovna, it's absurd."

"But I will, I *will* run away," she cried—and her eyes flashed with anger—"and if you don't agree I shall go and marry Gavrila Ardalionovitch. I *won't* be considered an audacious girl, and accused of goodness knows what."

"Are you out of your mind?" cried the prince, almost starting from his chair. "What do they accuse you of? who accuses you?"

"At home, everybody, mother, my sisters, Prince S., even that detestable little Colia! If they don't say it, they think it. I told them all so to their faces. I told mother and father and everybody. Mamma was ill all the day after it, and next day father and Alexandra told me that I didn't understand what nonsense I was talking. I informed them that they little knew me—I was not a small child—I understood every word in the language—that I had read a couple of Paul de Kok's novels two years since on purpose, so as to know all about everything. No sooner did mamma hear me say this than off she went in a swoon."

A strange thought passed through the prince's brain; he gazed intently at Aglaya and smiled.

He could not believe that this was the same haughty young girl who had once so proudly shown him Gania's letter. He could not understand how so proud and austere a "beauty" as she could show herself to be such an utter child as she now appeared.

"Have you always lived at home, Aglaya Ivanovna?" he asked. "I mean, have you never been to school, or any college, or anything?"

"No—never—nowhere! I've been at home all my life, corked up like a bottle; and so they expect me to be married.

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What are you laughing at again? I observe that you, too, have taken to laughing at me, and range yourself on their side against me," she added, frowning angrily. "Don't irritate me—I'm bad enough without that—I don't know what I am doing with myself sometimes. I am persuaded that you came here to-day in the full belief that I am in love with you, and that I arranged this meeting because I am so," she cried, with annoyance.

"I admit I was afraid that that was the case yesterday," blundered the prince, simply (he was rather confused), "but to-day I am quite convinced that—"

"How?" cried Aglaya—and her lower lip trembled violently. "You were *afraid* that I—you dared to think that I—my word, you suspected, perhaps, that I sent for you to come here in order to catch you in a trap, so that they should find us here together, and make you marry me—"

"Aglaya Ivanovna, aren't you ashamed of saying such a thing? How could such a horrible idea enter your sweet, innocent heart? I am certain you don't believe a word of what you say yourself, and probably you don't even know what you are talking about."

Aglaya sat confused and depressed; she seemed to have startled even herself by what she had said.

"No, I'm not; I'm not a bit ashamed!" she murmured. "And how do you know my heart is innocent? And how dared you send me a love letter that time?"

"*Love letter?* my letter a love letter? My letter was the most respectful of letters; it went straight from my heart, at what was perhaps the most painful moment of my life! I thought of you at the time as a kind of light. I—"

"Well, very well, very well!" she said, but quite in a different tone; she was remorseful now, and rather alarmed, and she bent forward to touch his shoulder, though still trying hard not to look him in the face, as if the more persuasively to beg him not to be angry with her. "Very well," she continued, looking thoroughly ashamed of herself, "I admit that I said a very foolish thing. I only did it just to try you. Take it as unsaid, and if I offended you, forgive me. Don't look straight at me like that, please, take your hand away. You called it a 'horrible idea;' I only said it to shock you; very often I am myself afraid of saying what I intend to say, and out it comes all the same. You have just told me that you wrote that letter during the most painful moment of your life. I know what moment that was!" she added softly, with her eyes on the ground.

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"Oh, if you could but know all!"

"I *do* know all!" she cried with another burst of indignation; "you were living in the same house as that audacious woman with whom you ran away." She did not blush as she said this; on the contrary, she grew pale and started from her seat, apparently oblivious of what she did, and immediately sat down again. Her lip continued to tremble for a long time.

There was silence for a moment or two. The prince was painfully impressed with the suddenness of this last reply, and did not know to what cause he should attribute it.

"I don't love you a bit!" she said suddenly, just as though the words had exploded out of her mouth.

The prince did not answer, and there was silence again. "I love Gavrila Ardalionovitch," she said, quickly; but hardly audibly, and with her head bent lower than ever.

"That is not true," said the prince in an equally low voice.

"What! I tell stories, do I? it *is* true! I gave him my promise a couple of days ago at this very bench."

The prince was startled, and reflected a moment.

"It is *not* true," he repeated, decidedly; "you have just invented all this!"

"You are wonderfully polite. You know he is greatly improved; he loves me better than his life. He let his hand burn before my very eyes in order to prove to me that he loves me better than his own life!"

"He burned his hand!"

"Yes, believe it or not! it's all the same to me!"

The prince sat silent once more. Aglaya did not seem to be joking, she was too angry for that.

"What! he brought a candle with him to this place? that is, if the episode happened here; otherwise I can't—"

"Yes, a candle! What's there improbable about that?"

"A whole one, and in a candlestick?"

"Yes—no—half a candle—an end, you know,—no, it was a whole candle; it's all the same; be quiet, can't you. He brought a box of matches too, if you like, and then lighted the candle and held his finger in it for half-an-hour and more!—there; can't that be?"

"I saw him yesterday, and his fingers were quite well!"

Aglaya suddenly burst out laughing, as simply as any child.

"Do you know why I have just told you all these lies?" She appealed to the prince, of a sudden, with the most child-like candour, and with the laugh still trembling on her lips.

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"Because when one tells a lie—if one insists on something unusual and eccentric—something too 'out of the way,' for anything you know,—the more impossible the thing is, the more plausible does the lie come out; I've noticed this, But I managed it badly; I didn't know how to work it." She suddenly frowned again at this point as though with some sudden unpleasant recollection.

"If"—she began, looking seriously and even sadly at him—"if I read you all that about the 'Poor Knight,' I wished to—to praise you for one thing,—but I also wished to show you that I knew all—and did not approve of your conduct."

"You are very unfair to me, and to that unfortunate woman of whom you spoke just now in such dreadful terms, Aglaya."

"Because I know all, all—and that is why I speak so. I know very well how you—half a year since—offered her your hand before *everybody*. Don't interrupt me, you see I am merely stating facts without any comment upon them. After that she ran away with Rogojin; then you lived in a house with her at some village or town, and she ran away from you." (Aglaya blushed dreadfully here.) "Then she returned to Rogojin again, who loves her like a madman. Then you, like a wise man as you are—came back here after her as soon as ever you heard that she had returned to Petersburg. Yesterday evening you sprang forward to protect her, and just now you dreamed about her. You see, I know all; you did come back here for her, for *her*—now didn't you?"

"Yes—I did—for her!" said the prince softly and sadly, and bending his head down, quite unconscious of the fact that Aglaya was glaring at him with eyes which burned like live coals. "I came to find out something—I don't believe in her future happiness as Rogojin's wife, although,—in a word, I did not know how to help her or what to do for her—but I came on the chance."

He shuddered and glanced at Aglaya; the latter was listening with a scowl of hatred in her face.

"If you came without knowing why, I suppose you love her very much indeed!" she said at last.

"No," said the prince, "no, I do not love her. Oh! if you only knew with what horror I recall that period which I spent with her!"

A convulsion seemed to sweep over his whole body at the recollection.

"Tell me about it then," said Aglaya.

"There is nothing in the story which you may not hear.

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Why I should wish to tell you, and only you, this experience of mine, I really cannot say; perhaps it really is because I love you very much. This unhappy woman is persuaded that she is the most hopeless, fallen creature in the world. Oh, do not condemn her! Do not cast stones at her! She has suffered too much already in the consciousness of her own undeserved ignominy!

"And wherein is she guilty—oh God!—every moment of her life she bemoans and bewails herself and cries out that she does not admit any guilt, that she is the victim of circumstances—the victim of a wicked libertine.

"But whatever she may say to you, remember that she does not believe it herself,—remember that she will believe nothing but that she is a guilty creature.

"When I tried to rid her soul of this gloomy fallacy, she suffered so terribly that my heart will never be quite at peace so long as I can remember that dreadful time!— Do you know why she left me? Simply to prove to me what is not the case—that she is base. But the worst of it is, she did not realize herself that that was all she wanted to prove by her departure! She went away in response to some inner prompting to do something disgraceful, in order that she might say to herself—'there—you've done a new act of shame—you base creature.'

"Oh, Aglaya—perhaps you cannot understand all this. Try to realize that in the perpetual admission of guilt she probably finds some dreadful unnatural satisfaction—as though she were revenging herself upon someone.

'"Now and again I was able to persuade her *almost* to see light around her; but she would soon fall, once more, into her old tormenting delusions, and would go so far as to blame me for placing myself on a pedestal above her (I never had an idea of such a thing!), and informed me, in reply to my proposal of marriage, that she 'did not expect either haughty sympathy or help or elevation of anybody.' You saw her last night—surely you don't suppose she can be happy among such people as those—you cannot suppose that such society is fit for her? You have no idea how enlightened she is and what an intellect she has. She astonished me sometimes."

"And you made her just such confessions there too, did you?"

"Oh no," continued the prince thoughtfully, "I was almost always silent there. I often wished to speak but I really did

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not know what to say. In some cases it is *best* to say nothing, I think; oh I loved her, yes, I loved her very much indeed; but afterwards—afterwards she guessed all."

"What did she guess?"

"That I only *pitied* her—and—and loved her no longer!"

"How do you know that what you think is the case? how do you know that she is not really in love with that—that rich cad—the man she eloped with?"

"Oh no! I know all, she only laughs at him, she has made a fool of him all along."

"Has she never laughed at you?"

"No, no,—in anger perhaps. Oh yes! she reproached me dreadfully that time, in anger; and suffered herself too! But afterwards—oh! don't remind me—don't remind me of all this!"

He hid his face in his hands.

"Are you aware that she writes to me almost every day?"

"So that is true, is it?" cried the prince, greatly agitated. "I had heard a report of it but would not believe it."

"Whom did you hear it from?" asked Aglaya, timidly.

"Rogojin said something about it yesterday, but nothing clear."

"Yesterday! morning or evening? before the music or after?"

"After—it was in the night—about twelve o'clock."

"Ah!—I see—well, if it was Rogojin—of course—but do you know what she writes to me about?"

"I should not be surprised by anything, mind—she is mad!"

"There are the letters" (Aglaya took three letters out of her pocket and threw them down before the prince). "For a whole week she has been entreating and worrying and persuading me to marry you. She—well, of course she is clever though she may be mad—much cleverer than I am, as you say,—well, she writes that she is in love with me herself and tries to see me every day if only from a distance. She writes that you love me, and that she has long known it and seen it, and that you and she talked about me—there. She wishes to see you happy and she says that she is certain only I can ensure you the happiness you deserve. She writes such strange, wild letters —I haven't shown them to anyone;—now, do you know what all this means? can't you guess anything?"

"It is madness—it is merely another proof of her insanity!" said the prince, and his lips trembled.

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"You are crying, aren't you?"

"No, Aglaya, no, I'm not crying." The prince looked sadly at Aglaya.

"Well, what am I to do? what do you advise me? I cannot go on receiving these letters, you know."

"Oh, let her alone, I entreat you!" cried the prince. "What can *you* do in this dark gloomy mystery?—you can do nothing—let her alone, and I'll use all my power to prevent her writing you any more letters."

"If so, you are a heartless man!" cried Aglaya. "As if you can't see that it is not myself she loves, but you, *you*, and only you. Surely you have not remarked everything else in her and only not *this*. Do you know what these letters mean? they mean jealousy, sir—nothing but pure jealousy! She—do you think she will ever really marry this Rogojin, as she says here she will? She would take her own life the day after you and I were united."

The prince shuddered; his heart seemed to freeze within him. He gazed at Aglaya in wonderment; it was difficult for her to admit the fact that this child before him could really be a grown woman.

"God knows, Aglaya, that to restore her peace of mind and make her happy I would willingly give up my life for her; but I cannot love her, and she knows that."

"Oh, make a sacrifice of yourself; that sort of thing becomes you so well, you know, you are such an exalted kind of general benefactor, why not do it? And don't call me 'Aglaya;' you have done it several times lately; you are bound, it is your *duty* to 'resuscitate' her; you must go off somewhere again to soothe and pacify her poor heart. Why, you love her, you know."

"I cannot sacrifice myself so, though I admit I did wish to do so once; who knows? perhaps, I still wish to. But I know for *certain* that if she married me it would be her ruin; I know this and therefore I leave her alone. I ought to have been to see her this morning, now I shall probably not go. She is proud, she would never forgive me the nature of the love I should give her, and we should both be ruined. This may be unnatural, I don't know; but everything seems so unnatural. You say she *loves* me, as if this is *love*. As if any one could love *me*, after what I have been through, during my invalid life. No, no, there may be some sort of sentiment; but it is not love."

"How pale you have grown," cried Aglaya in alarm.

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"Oh, it's nothing, I haven't slept, that's all, and I'm rather weak. I—we certainly did talk about you at that time, Aglaya."

"Oh, indeed, it is true then; *you could actually talk about me with her*; and—and how could you have been fond of me when you had only seen me once?"

"I don't know. Perhaps, it was that I seemed to hit upon a new light in the midst of my then gloomy days. I told you the truth when I said I did not know why I thought of you before all others. Of course it was all a sort of dream, a dream amidst the horrors of reality; afterwards I began to busy myself with various matters for distraction; I did not intend to come back here for two or three years—"

"Then you came on purpose for her?"

Something in Aglaya's voice trembled.

"Yes, I came for her sake."

There was a moment or two of gloomy silence. Aglaya rose from her seat.

"If you say," she began, in feeble shaky tones, "if you say that this woman of yours is mad—at all events *I* have nothing to do with her insane phantasies—kindly take these three letters, Lef Nicolaievitch, and pitch them back to her, from me. And if she dares," cried Aglaya suddenly, much louder than before, "if she dares so much as write me one word more, tell her I shall tell my father, and that she shall be taken to a house of correction or a lunatic asylum."

The prince jumped up and stared in alarm at Aglaya's sudden wrath, and a mist seemed to come before his eyes.

"You *cannot* really feel like that; you don't mean what you say; it is not true," he murmured.

"It *is* true, it *is* true," cried Aglaya, almost beside herself with rage.

"What's true? What's all this? What's true?" said an alarmed voice just beside them.

Before them stood Lizabetha Prokofievna.

"Why, it's true that I am going to marry Gavrila Ardalionovitch, that I love him and intend to elope with him tomorrow," cried Aglaya, turning upon her mother. "Do you hear? is your curiosity satisfied? are you gratified with what you have heard?"

Aglaya rushed away homewards with these words.

"H'm! well, *you* are not going away just yet, my friend, at all events," said Lizabetha, stopping the prince. "Kindly step this way with me, and let me have a little explanation of the

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mystery. Nice sort of goings on, these; and I haven't slept a wink all night as it is."

The prince followed her homewards.

IX.

ARRIVED at her house, Lizabetha Prokofievna paused in the first room reached; she could go no further, and there she subsided into a couch quite exhausted, too feeble to remember so much as to ask the prince to take a seat. This was a fine large reception room, full of lovely flowers and with a glass door leading into the back garden.

Alexandra and Adelaida came in almost immediately, and looked inquiringly at the prince and their mother.

The girls generally rose at about nine in the morning in the country; Aglaya, of late, had been in the habit of getting up rather earlier and having a walk in the garden, but not at seven o'clock, about eight or a little later was her usual time.

Lizabetha Prokofievna, who really had not slept all night, rose at about eight on purpose to meet Aglaya in the garden and walk with her; but she could not find her either in the garden or in her own room.

This agitated the old lady, considerably; and she awoke her other daughters. Next, she learned from the maid that Aglaya had gone into the park before seven o'clock. The sisters made a joke of Aglaya's last new idea and told their mother that if she went into the park to look for her, Aglaya would, probably, be very angry with her, and that she was pretty sure to be sitting reading on the green bench that she had talked about two or three days since, and as to the position of which she had nearly quarrelled with Prince S. who did not see anything particularly lovely in the spot.

Arrived at the *rendezvous* of the prince and her daughter, and hearing the strange words of the latter, Lizabetha Prokofievna had been dreadfully alarmed, for many reasons. However, now that she had dragged the prince home with her, she began to feel a little frightened at the job she had undertaken. Why should not Aglaya meet the prince in the park and have a chat with him, even if such a meeting should be by appointment?

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"Don't suppose, prince," she began, bracing herself up for the effort, "don't suppose that I have brought you here to ask questions. After last night, I assure you, I am not so exceedingly anxious to see you at all; I could have postponed the pleasure for a long while." She paused; it was almost a miss-fire, this.

"But at the same time you would be very glad indeed to know how I happened to meet Aglaya Ivanovna this morning?" The prince finished her speech for her with the utmost composure.

"Well, what then, supposing I *should* like to know?" said Lizabetha Prokofievna, blushing. "I'm sure I am not afraid of plain speaking. I never offended anyone, and I never wish to, and—"

"Pardon me, it is no offence to anyone to wish to know this. We met at the green bench this morning, punctually at seven o'clock, according to an agreement made by Aglaya Ivanovna with myself yesterday. She gave me the invitation yesterday evening by note; she said that she wished to see me and speak to me about something important. We met and conversed for an hour about all sorts of matters mostly concerning Aglaya Ivanovna herself, and that's all."

"Of course it is all, my friend. I don't doubt that fact for a moment," said Lizabetha Prokofievna with dignity.

"Well done, prince, capital!" cried Aglaya, who entered the room at this moment. "Thank you heartily for assuming that I am not going to demean myself with any lies, here. Come, that's enough, mamma, or do you intend to put any more questions?"

"You know I have never needed to blush before you, up to this day, though perhaps you would have been glad enough to catch me at it," said Lizabetha Prokofievna, with majesty. "Good-bye, prince, forgive me for bothering you. I trust you will rest assured of my unalterable esteem for you."

The prince made his bow and retired at once.

Alexandra and Adelaida smiled and whispered to each other, while Lizabetha Prokofievna glared severely at them. "We are only laughing at the prince's beautiful bow, mamma," said Adelaida; "sometimes he bows just like a meal-sack, but to-day, my word, he was like—like Evgenie Pavlovitch!"

"It is the *heart* which is the best teacher of refinement and dignity, not the dancing-master," said her mother, sententiously, and departed upstairs to her own room, not so much as glancing at Aglaya.

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When the prince reached home, at about nine o'clock, he found Vera Lebedeff and the maid on the balcony. They were both busy trying to tidy the place up after last night's disorderly party.

"Thank goodness, we've just managed to finish it before you came in!" said Vera, joyfully.

"Good-morning! My head whirls so; I didn't sleep all night. I should like to have a nap now."

"Here, on the balcony? Very well, I'll tell them all not to come and wake you. Papa has gone out somewhere."

The servant left the room. Vera was about to follow her, but returned and approached the prince with a preoccupied air.

"Prince!" she said, "have pity on that poor boy; don't turn him out to-day."

"Not for the world; he shall do just as he likes."

"He won't do any harm now; and—and don't be too severe with him."

"Oh dear no! Why—"

"And—and you won't *laugh* at him? that's the chief thing of all."

"Oh, no! never."

"How foolish I am to talk about such things to a man like yourself," said Vera, blushing. "Though you *do* look tired," she added, half turning away; "your eyes are so splendid at this moment—so full of happiness."

"Really? happiness?" asked the prince, gleefully, and he laughed merrily.

But Vera, the simple-minded unceremonious little girl that she was (just like a little boy in that), here became dreadfully confused, of a sudden, and ran hastily out of the room, laughing and blushing.

"What a dear little thing she is," thought the prince, and immediately forgot all about her.

He walked to the far end of the balcony where the sofa stood, with a table in front of it; here he sat down and covered his face with his hands, and so remained for ten minutes. Suddenly he put his hand in his coat-pocket and hurriedly produced three letters.

But the door opened again, and in came Colia.

The prince actually felt glad that he had been interrupted, and might return the letters to his pocket. He was glad of the respite.

"Well," said Colia, plunging *in medias res*, as he always did,

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"here's a go! What do you think of Hippolyte now? don't respect him any longer, eh?"

"Why not? But look here, Colia, I'm tired; besides, the subject is too melancholy to begin upon again. How is he, though?"

"Asleep—he'll sleep for a couple of hours yet. I quite understand—you haven't slept—you walked about the park, I know. Agitation—excitement—all that sort of things—quite natural too!"

"How do you know I walked in the park and didn't sleep at home?"

"Vera just told me. She tried to persuade me not to come in, but I couldn't help myself, just for one minute. I have been having my turn at the bed-side for the last two hours; young Kostia Lebedeff is there now. Burdofsky has gone. Now, lie down, prince, make yourself comfortable, ta, ta, sleep well; I'm awfully struck, you know."

"Naturally, all this—"

"No, no, I mean with the 'explanation,' especially that part of it where he talks about Providence and future life. There is a gigantic thought there."

The prince gazed affectionately at Colia, who, of course, had come in solely for the purpose of talking about this "gigantic thought."

"But the chief point is, not any one particular thought, but the general circumstances of the case. If Voltaire had written this now, or Rousseaud I should have just read it, and thought it remarkable, but should not have been so *impressed* by it. But a man who knows for certain that he has but ten minutes to live and can talk like that—why—it's—it's *pride*, that is. It is really a most extraordinary, exalted independence of personal dignity, it's—it's *brave*, that is. What a *gigantic* strength of spirit, eh? And to accuse a fellow like that of not putting the cap on on purpose; it's base, petty, mean. You know he deceived us last night, the cunning rascal. I never packed his bag with him, the least bit, and *I* never saw his pistol. He packed it all himself. But he threw me out of the running like that, you see. Vera says you are going to let him stay on; I *swear* there's no danger, especially as we are always with him."

"Who was by him at night?"

"I, and Burdofsky, and Kostia Lebedeff. Keller stayed a little while and then went over to Lebedeff's to sleep. Ferdishenko slept at Lebedeff's, too; but he went away at seven

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o'clock. My father is always at Lebedeff's; but he has gone away just now; I daresay Lebedeff will be coming in here directly; he has been looking for you and called twice; I don't know what he wants. Shall we let him in or not, if you are asleep? I'm going to have a nap too. By-the-bye, such a curious thing happened: Burdofsky woke me at seven, and I met my father just outside the room, *so* drunk, he didn't even know me. He stood before me like a log and bent over to peer at me, and said he was going to have a look at the sick man. I told him how Hippolyte was and all that. 'Yes,' he says, 'that's all very well, but I *really* came to warn you that you must look out what you say before Ferdishenko;' do you follow me, prince?"

"Yes. Is it really so? However, it's all the same to *us*, of course."

"Of course it is; we are not a secret society; and that being the case it is all the more curious that the general should have been on his way to wake me up in order to tell me this."

"Ferdishenko has gone, you say?"

"Yes, he went at seven o'clock. He came into the room on his way out; I was watching just then. He said he was going to spend 'the rest of the night' at Wilkin's; there's a tipsy old fellow, a friend of his, of that name. Well I'm off. Oh, here's Lebedeff himself. The prince wants to go to sleep, Lukian Timofeyich, so you may just turn round and go away again."

"One moment, my dear prince, just *one*. I must absolutely speak to you about something which is *most* grave, at all events to *me*," said Lebedeff, mysteriously and solemnly, entering the room with a bow and looking extremely important. He had but just returned, and carried his hat in his hand. His face looked preoccupied and most unusually dignified.

The prince begged him to take a chair.

"I hear you have called twice; I suppose you are still worried about yesterday's affair, I—"

"What, about that boy, you mean? Oh, dear no, yesterday my ideas were a little—well—*mixed*; to-day, I assure you, I shall not oppose in the slightest degree *any* suggestions it may please you to make."

"What's up with you this morning, Lebedeff? you look so important and dignified, and you choose you words so carefully and all," said the prince, smiling.

"Mr. Colia," said Lebedeff, in a most amiable tone of voice, addressing the boy, "as I have a communication to make to the prince which concerns only—"

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"Of course, of course, not my affair, all right," said Colia, and away he went.

"I love that boy for his perception," said Ledeдeff, looking after him. "My dear prince," he continued, "I have had a terrible misfortune, either last night or early this morning. I cannot tell the exact time."

"What is it?"

"I have lost four hundred roubles out of my side pocket! They're gone!" said Lebedeff, with a sour smile.

"You've lost four hundred roubles? Oh! I'm sorry for that."

"Yes, it is serious for a poor man who lives by his toil."

"Of course, of course! How was it?"

"Oh, the wine is to blame, of course. I confess to you, you see, prince, as I would to Providence itself. Yesterday I received four hundred roubles from a debtor at about five in the afternoon, and came down here by train. I had my purse in my pocket. Changing my uniform* for my plain clothes, I put the money into the pocket of the latter intending to keep it by me, as I expected to have an applicant for it in the evening."

"It's true then, Lebedeff, that you advertise to lend money on security?"

"Yes, through solicitors. My own name doesn't appear. I have a large family, you see, and at a small percentage—"

"Quite so, quite so. I only asked for information—excuse the question. Go on."

"Well, meanwhile that sick boy was brought, and those guests came in, and we had tea, and—well, we made merry—to my ruin! Hearing of your birthday afterwards, and excited with the circumstances of the evening, I ran upstairs and changed my plain clothes once more for my uniform coat—you must have noticed I had my uniform on all the evening? Well, I forgot the money in the pocket of my old coat—you know when God will ruin a man he first of all bereaves him of his senses, and it was only this morning at half-past seven that I woke up and grabbed at my coat pocket, first thing. The pocket was empty—the purse gone, and not a trace to be found!"

"Dear me! this is very unpleasant!"

"Unpleasant! indeed it is. You have found a very appropriate expression," said Lebedeff politely, but with sarcasm.

* Civil Service clerks in Russia wear uniform.

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"But what's to be done? It's a serious matter," said the prince thoughtfully. "Don't you think you may have dropped it out of your pocket whilst intoxicated?"

"Certainly. Anything is possible when one is intoxicated, as you neatly express it, prince; but consider, if I, intoxicated or not, dropped an object out of my pocket on to the ground, that object ought to remain on the ground. Where is the object then?"

"Didn't you put it away in some drawer, perhaps?"

"I've looked everywhere, and turned up everything."

"I confess this matter disturbs me a good deal. Some one must have picked it up from the floor then."

"Or taken it out of my pocket—two alternatives."

"It is very distressing, because *who* could—?"

"Most undoubtedly, excellent prince, you have hit it—that is the very question. How wonderfully you express the exact situation in a few words."

"Come, come, Lebedeff, no sarcasm! It's a serious—"

"Sarcasm!" cried Lebedeff, wringing his hands.

"All right, all right, I'm not angry, I'm only put out about this. Whom do you suspect?"

"That is a very difficult and complicated question. I cannot suspect the servant for she was in the kitchen the whole evening, nor do I suspect any of our children."

"I should think not. Go on."

"Then it must be one of the guests."

"Is such a thing possible though?"

"Absolutely and utterly impossible—and yet, so it is. But one thing I am sure of, if it be a theft, it was committed, *not* in the evening when we were all together, but either at night or early in the morning; therefore, by one of those who slept here. Burdofsky and Colia I except of course. They did not even come into my room."

"Yes, or even if they had— But who did sleep with you?"

"Four of us, including myself, in two rooms. The general, myself, Keller, and Ferdishenko. One of us four it must have been. I don't suspect myself, though such cases have been known."

"Oh! *do* go on, Lebedeff. Don't drag it out so."

"Well, there are three left in then—Keller firstly. He is a drunkard to begin with, and a liberal (in the sense of other people's pockets), otherwise with more of the ancient knight about him than of the modern liberal. He was with the sick man at first, but came over afterwards because there was no place to lie down in the room and the floor was so hard."

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"You suspect him?"

"I *did* suspect him. When I woke up at half-past seven and tore my hair in despair for my loss and carelessness, I awoke the general who was sleeping the sleep of innocence near me.

"Taking into consideration the sudden disappearance of Ferdishenko, which was suspicious enough in itself, we decided to search Keller, who was lying there as still as an iron nail. Well, we searched his clothes thoroughly, and not a farthing did we find, in fact, his pockets all had holes in them. We found a dirty calico-print handkerchief and a love letter from some scullery-maid. The general decided that he was innocent. We awoke him for further inquiries, and had the greatest difficulty in making him understand what was up. He opened his mouth and stared—he looked so stupid and so absurdly innocent. It wasn't Keller, sir."

"Oh, I'm so glad! I'm so glad!" said the prince, joyfully. "I was so afraid it might be he."

"Afraid! Then you had some grounds for supposing he might be the culprit?" said Lebedeff, frowning.

"Oh no—not a bit! it was foolish of me to say I was afraid! Don't repeat it please, Lebedeff, don't tell anyone I said that!"

"My dear prince! your words lie in the lowest depth of my secret heart—it is their tomb!" said Lebedeff solemnly, pressing his hat to the region of his heart.

"Thanks, very well. Then I suppose it's Ferdishenko, that is, I mean, you suspect Ferdishenko?"

"Whom else?" said Lebedeff softly, gazing intently into the prince's face.

"Of course—quite so, whom else? At least, what are the proofs?"

"We have evidence; in the first place, his mysterious disappearance at seven o'clock, or even earlier."

"I know, Colia told me that he had said he was off to—I forget the name, some friend of his, to finish the night."

"H'm! then Colia has spoken to you already?"

"Not about the theft."

"He does not know of it; I have kept it a secret. Very well, Ferdishenko went off to Wilkin's. That is curious in itself, but here the evidence opens out still further. He left his address, you see, when he went away. Now prince, consider, why did he leave his address? Why do you suppose he went out of his way to tell Colia that he had gone to Wilkin's? Who cared to know that he was going to Wilkin's? No no! prince, this is *finesse*, thieves' *finesse*; this is as good as saying

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'There, how can I be a thief when I leave my address? I'm not concealing my movements as a thief would;' do you understand, prince?"

"Oh yes, but that is not enough."

"Second proof:—the scent turns out to be false, and the address given is a sham. An hour after—that is at about eight, I went to Wilkin's myself, and there was no trace of Ferdishenko. The maid did tell me, certainly, that an hour or so since some one had been hammering at the door, and had smashed the bell; she said she would not open the door because she didn't want to wake her master; probably she was too lazy to get up herself; such phenomena are met with occasionally!"

"But is that all your evidence? it is not enough!"

"Well, prince, whom are we to suspect then? consider!" said Lebedeff with almost servile amiability, smiling at the prince; there was a look of cunning lurking in his eyes, however.

"You should search your room and all the cupboards again," said the prince after a moment or two of silent reflection.

"But I *have* done so, my dear prince!" said Lebedeff more sweetly than ever.

"H'm! why must you needs go up and change your coat like that?" asked the prince, banging the table with his fist, with annoyance.

"Oh, don't be so worried on my account, prince; I assure you I am not worth it! at least I *alone*; but I see you are suffering on behalf of the criminal too, for wretched Ferdishenko in fact!"

"Of course you have given me a disagreeable enough thing to think about," said the prince irritably, "but what are you going to do, since you are so sure it was Ferdishenko?"

"But who else *could* it be, my very dear prince?" repeated Lebedeff, as sweet as sugar again, "if you don't wish me to suspect Mr. Burdofsky?"

"Of course not."

"Nor the general? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nonsense!" said the prince angrily, twisting round upon him in his seat.

"Quite so, nonsense! Ha, ha, ha! dear me, he did amuse me, did the general; we went off on the hot scent to Wilkin's together, you know; but I must first observe that the general was even more thunderstruck than I myself this morning, when I awoke him after discovering the theft; so much so that his very face changed—he grew red and then pale, and at

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length flew into a paroxysm of such noble wrath that I assure you I was quite surprised! He is a most generous-hearted man! He tells lies by the thousands, I know, but it is merely a weakness; he is a man of the highest feelings; a simple-minded man too, and a man who carries the conviction of innocence in his very appearance. I love that man, sir; I may have told you so before; it is a weakness of mine. Well—he suddenly stopped in the middle of the road, opened out his coat and bared his breast. "Search me," he says, "you searched Keller; why don't you search me too? It is only fair!" says he. And all the while his legs and hands were trembling with anger, and as white as a sheet all over! So I said to him, "Nonsense, general; if anybody but yourself had said that to me of you, I'd have taken my head, my own head, and put it on a large dish and carried it round to anyone who suspected you; and I should have said: 'There, you see that head? it's my head, and I'll go bail with that head for him! yes, and walk through the fire for him too. There,' says I, 'that's how I'd answer for *you*, general!' Then he reached at me, all in the middle of the street mind, and hugged me so tight (crying over my head all the while) that I coughed fit to choke a man! 'You are the one friend left to me amid all my misfortunes,' says he. Oh, he's a man of sentiment, that! He went on to tell me a story of how he had been accused, or suspected, of stealing five hundred thousand roubles once, as a young man; and how, the very next day, he had rushed into a burning, blazing house and saved the very count who suspected him, and Nina Alexandrovna (who was then a young girl) from a fiery death. The count embraced him, and that was how he came to marry Nina Alexandrovna, he said; as for the money, it was found among the ruins next day in an English iron box with a secret lock; it had got under the floor somehow and lost itself, and if it had not been for the fire it would never have been found! The whole thing is of course an absolute fabrication, sir! When he spoke of Nina Alexandrovna he cried, sir! She's a grand woman is Nina Alexandrovna, though she is very angry with me!"

"Are you acquainted?"

"Well, hardly at all; I wish I were, with all my heart, if only for the sake of justifying myself in her eyes. Nina Alexandrovna has a grudge against me for, as she thinks, corrupting her husband as to drinking; whereas in reality I not only do not corrupt him, but I actually keep him out of harm's way, and out of bad company. Besides, he's my friend, sir, so

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much so, that I shall not lose sight of him again. Has he borrowed any money from you, prince?"

"No, he has not asked me for any."

"Ah, he's ashamed to; he *meant* to ask you, I know, for he said so. I suppose he thinks that as you gave him some once (you remember), you would probably refuse if he asked you again."

"Do you ever let him have money?"

"Prince! money! why I would give that man not only my money, but my very life, if he wanted it. Well, perhaps that's exaggeration; not life, we'll say, but some illness, a boil or a bad cough, or anything of that sort, I would stand with pleasure, for his sake; for I consider him a great man gone wrong, sir—money indeed!"

"H'm, then you *do* give him money."

"N—no, I have never given him any money, and he knows well that I will never give him any; because I am anxious to keep him out of intemperate ways. He is going to town with me now; for you must know I am off to Petersburg after Ferdishenko, while the scent is hot; I'm certain he is there. I shall let the general go one way, while I go the other; we have so arranged matters in order to pop out upon Ferdishenko, you see, from different sides. But I am going to follow that naughty old general and catch him I know where, at a certain widow's house; for I think it will be a good lesson for his morals, as a married man, to put him to shame by catching him flirting with the widow."

"Oh, Lebedeff, don't, don't make any noise about it," said the prince, much agitated, and speaking in a low voice.

"Not for the world, not for the world. I merely wish to make him ashamed of himself, and see what sort of a face he'll make. Oh prince, great though the misfortune be to myself, I cannot help thinking of his morals. He has a great weakness for this lady, prince, you see—and—and he would like to give her money if he had it—I don't insinuate any—the fact that he—you know what I mean—I am ready to go bail for him with all my blood and life, but you must admit that intemperance, and drunkenness, and this widow, and all together, you know, might very easily lead him to do *anything*."

"You see, Lebedeff, a mistake here would be a dreadful thing; this Ferdishenko, I would not say a word against him, of course; but, who knows? perhaps it really was he? I mean he really does seem to me to be a more likely man than, than any other."

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Lebedeff strained his eyes and ears to take in what the prince was about to say; the latter was frowning more and more, and was walking excitedly up and down the room, stopping now and again to look at Lebedeff.

"You see," he said, "I was given to understand that Ferdishenko was that sort of man, don't you know, that one can't say everything before him; one has to take care not to say too much, you understand? I say this to prove that he really is, so to speak, a more likely man to have done this, than any one else, eh? you understand? I think that is an important item in the case."

"And who told you this about Ferdishenko?"

"Oh, I was told. Of course I don't altogether believe it, myself; I am very sorry that I should have had to say this, because I assure you I don't believe in it myself; it is all nonsense of course; what an ass I am to say anything about it."

"You see, it is very important, it is *most* important to know where you got this report from," said Lebedeff, excitedly; he had risen from his seat, and was trying to keep step with the prince, walking up and down the room. "Because look here, prince, I don't mind telling you now that as we were going along to Wilkin's this morning, after telling me what you know about the fire, and saving the count and all that, the general was pleased to drop certain hints to the same effect about Ferdishenko, but so vaguely, and clumsily, that I thought better to put a few questions to him on the matter, with the result that I found the whole thing was an invention of his excellency's own mind. Of course he only lies with the best intentions, still he lied about it; and such being the case, where could you have heard the same report? It was the inspiration of the moment with him, you understand, so who could have told *you*? It is an important question, you see!"

"It was Colia told me, and his father told *him* at about six this morning; they met at the threshold, when Colia was leaving the room for something or other." The prince told Lebedeff all that Colia had made known to himself, in detail.

"There now, that's what we may call *scent*," said Lebedeff, rubbing his hands and laughing silently. "I thought it must be so, you see. The general interrupted his innocent slumbers, at six o'clock, in order to go and wake his beloved son, and warn him of the dreadful danger of companionship with Ferdishenko. Dear me! what a dreadfully dangerous man Ferdishenko must be, and what touching paternal solicitude, on the part of his excellency, ha! ha! ha!"

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"Listen, Lebedeff," began the prince, quite overwhelmed with grief and annoyance, "*do* act quietly—don't make a scandal, Lebedeff, I ask you—I entreat you. No one must know—*no one*, mind."

"Be assured, most honourable, most worthy of princes—be assured that the whole matter shall die within my generous heart!" cried Lebedeff, in a paroxsym of absolute inspiration. "We'll act together, worthiest of princes, you and I, quietly and surely—and together."

X.

THE prince understood at last why he shivered with dread every time he thought of the three letters in his pocket, and why he was so pleased to put off the evil moment of reading them.

When he fell off into a heavy sleep on the sofa on the balcony, without having had the courage to open a single one of the three envelopes, he again dreamed a painful dream, and once more that poor, "criminal" woman appeared to him. Again she gazed at him with tears sparkling on her long lashes, and beckoned him after her; and again he awoke, as before, with the painful picture of her face haunting him.

He longed to get up and go to her at once—but he *could not*. At length, almost in despair, he unfolded the letters, and began to read them.

These letters were like a dream. The prince felt, before he even opened the envelopes, that the very fact of their existence was like a nightmare. How could she ever have made up her mind to write them to *her*? he asked himself. How could she write about *that* at all? and how could such a wild idea enter her head? And yet, the strangest part of the matter was, that while he read the letters, he himself *almost* believed in the possibility, and even in the justification, of the idea he had thought so wild. As he read, and paused to think, and read again, he several times felt inclined to say to himself that he had foreseen and known beforehand all that was written here; it even seemed to him that he had read the whole of this some time or other, long, long ago; and all that had tormented and

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alarmed him up to now was to be found in these old, long since read letters.

"When you open this letter" (so the first began), "look at the signature before you do anything else. The signature will tell you all, so that I need explain nothing, and there is no need to justify myself before you. Were I in any way on a footing with yourself, you might be offended with my audacity; but who am I, and who are you? We are such absolute contrasts, and I am so entirely out of all reckoning in your eyes, that I could not offend you if I wished to do so."

Further on, in another place, she wrote: "Do not consider my words as the sickly ecstasies of a diseased mind, but you are, in my opinion—perfection. I have seen you—I see you every day. I do not judge you, mind; I have not tried you with scales, and found you Perfection—I simply believe it. But I must confess my sin against you—I love you. One cannot help loving perfection. One *can* only look on perfection *as* perfection—and, meanwhile, I am in love with you. Though love equalises, do not fear. I have not compared myself with you even in my most secret thoughts. I have written 'Do not fear,' as if you could fear. I would kiss the print-marks of your foot if I could; but, oh! I am not comparing myself with you—look at the signature—quick, look at the signature!"

"However, observe," (she wrote in another of the letters), "that although I couple you with him, yet I have not once asked you whether you love him. He fell in love with you, though he saw you but once. He spoke of you as of 'the light.' These are his own words—I heard him use them. But I understood without his saying it that you are all that Light is to him. I lived near him for a whole month, and I understood then that you, too, must love him. I think of you and him as one."

"What was the matter yesterday" (she wrote on another sheet)? "I passed by you, and you seemed to me to *blush*. Perhaps it was only my fancy. If I were to bring you to the most loathsome, dark cavern, and show you the revelation of undisguised vice—you should not blush. *You* can never feel anger or the sense of personal affront. You may hate all who are mean, or base, or unworthy—but not for yourself—only for those whom they wrong. No one can offend *you*. Do you know, I think you ought to love me—for you are the same in my eyes as in his. You are as light—an angel cannot hate—an angel must love. You cannot help loving all, since you can compare with none, and are above all offence and above all anger. Oh! how bitter it would be to me to know

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that you felt anger or contempt on my account, for that would be your fall—you would become comparable at once with such as me.

"Yesterday, after seeing you, I went home and thought out a picture:

"Artists always draw the Saviour as an actor in one of the stories told in the Gospel; I should do differently. I should represent Christ alone—the disciples did leave Him alone occasionally. I should paint one little child left with Him; this child had been playing about near Him, and had probably just been telling the Saviour something in its pretty baby prattle. Christ had listened to it, but was now musing—one hand reposing on the child's bright head; His eyes were gazing out with a far-off expression. Thought—great as the Universe—was in His eyes—His face is sad. The little one leaned its elbow upon Christ's knee, and with its cheek resting on its hand, gazed up at Him as children only do gaze. The sun is setting, and there you have my picture.

"You are innocent—and in your innocence is all your perfection—oh, remember that! What is my passion to you?—you are mine now; I shall be near you all my life—I shall not live long!"

At length, in the very last letter of all he found:

"For Heaven's sake, don't misunderstand me! do not think that I humiliate myself by writing thus to you, or that I belong to that class of people, who take a satisfaction in degrading themselves—from a certain sort of pride—

"Why do I wish to unite you two? for your sakes or my own? God knows what it is dwelling within me now—it is not myself—I don't think I exist any longer. I can see it every day in two dreadful eyes which are always looking at me, even when not present. These eyes are silent now, they say nothing, but I know their secret; this house is gloomy and dreary, and there is a secret in it. I am convinced that in some box he has a razor hidden, tied round with silk, just like the one that Moscow murderer had. This man also lived with his mother, and had a razor hidden away, tied round with white silk, and with this razor he intended to cut a certain throat.

"All the while I was in their house I felt sure that somewhere or other beneath the floor there was hidden away some dreadful corpse, wrapped in oil-cloth, and with quicklime all over it, perhaps buried there by his father, who knows? just as was the case with the Moscow murderer. I could have shown you the very spot!

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"He is always silent, but I know well that he loves me so that he must hate me still more. My wedding and yours are to be on one day, so I have pre-arranged with him. I have no secrets from him. I would kill him from very fright, but he will kill me first; he has just burst out laughing, and says that I am raving; he knows I am writing to you."

And so on—there was a quantity of this delirious wandering in the letters—one of them was a very long one.

The prince came out of the park at last, the dark gloomy park, in which he had wandered about for hours just as yesterday. The lovely bright night seemed to him to be lighter than ever. "It must be quite early," he thought. (He had forgotten his watch at home.) There was a sound of distant music somewhere. "Ah," he thought, "the Vauxhall! they won't be there to-day, of course!" At this moment he noticed that he was close to their house; he had felt that he must gravitate to this spot eventually, and, soothed at heart, he mounted the balcony steps.

No one met him, the balcony was empty, and nearly pitch dark. He stood in the middle of the room in perplexity. Suddenly the door opened, and in came Alexandra, candle in hand. Seeing the prince she stopped before him in surprise, looking at him questioningly.

It was clear that she had been merely passing through the balcony room from door to door, and had not had the remotest notion that she would meet anyone.

"How did you turn up here?" she asked, at last.

"I—I—came in—"

"Mamma is not very well, nor is Aglaya. Adelaida has gone to bed, and I am just going. We were all alone the whole evening, to-day. Father and Prince S. have gone to town."

"I have come to you—now—to—"

"Do you know what time it is?"

"N—no!"

"Half past twelve. We always retire at one."

"Is it—I—I thought it was half past nine!"

"Never mind!" she laughed, "but why didn't you come earlier—perhaps you were expected!"

"I thought—" he stammered, making for the door.

"*Au revoir!* I shall amuse them all with this story to-morrow, good-night."

He walked along the park road towards his own house. His heart was beating loud and painfully, his thoughts were

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confused, everything around him seemed to be taking a part in some dream.

And suddenly, just as twice already this day, he had awaked from sleep with the same vision in his eyes, that very apparition now seemed to rise up before him. The woman appeared to step out from the park, and stand in the path in front of him, as though she had been waiting for him there.

He shuddered and stopped; she seized his hand and pressed it frenziedly.

No, this was no apparition!

There she stood at last, face to face with him, for the first time since their separation.

She said something, but he looked silent and speechless back in her face; his heart ached and throbbed painfully. Oh! never again should he banish the recollection of this meeting with her, and he never remembered it but with the same pain and agony of mind.

She went on her knees before him—there in the open street—like a mad woman; he retreated a step in alarm, but she caught his hand and held it and kissed it, and, just as in his dream, the tears were sparkling on her long beautiful lashes.

"Rise, get up!" he said, in a frightened whisper, raising her, "get up, quick!"

"Are you happy—are you happy?" she asked, "just tell me this one word—are you happy *now?* to-day, this moment? Have you just been with her? what did she say?"

She did not rise from her knees; she would not listen to him; she put her questions hurriedly, and spoke very quickly, as though she were pursued and had no time.

"I am going away to-morrow, as you bade me—I won't stay—so that this is the last time I shall see you, the *last time!* this is really and truly the last time!"

"Oh, be calm—be calm—and get up!" he muttered, in despair.

She gazed thirstily at him and clutched his hand tight.

"Good-bye!" she said at last, and rose and left him, almost at a run.

The prince noticed that Rogojin had suddenly appeared at her side, and had taken her arm and was running with her.

"Wait a minute, prince," shouted the latter, as he went, "I shall be back here in five minutes."

He reappeared in five minutes as he had said. The prince was waiting for him in the same spot.

"I've put her in the carriage," he said, "it has been waiting

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round the corner there since ten o'clock. She expected that you would be with that girl all the evening. I told her exactly what you wrote me. She won't write to the girl any more, she promises, and to-morrow she will be off, as you wish. She desired to see you for the last time, although you refused, so we've been sitting and waiting on that bench till you should pass on your way home."

"Did she bring you with her of her own accord?"

"Of course she did!" said Rogojin, showing his teeth; "and I could see for myself what I knew before. You've read her letters I suppose?"

"Did you really read them?" asked the prince, impressed with the thought that rose in his mind at the moment.

"Of course—she showed them to me herself. You are thinking of the razor, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, mad, mad girl!" cried the prince, wringing his hands.

"Who knows? perhaps she is not so mad after all," said Rogojin, softly, as though thinking aloud.

The prince made no remark.

"Well, good-bye," said Rogojin; "I'm off to-morrow too, you know; remember me kindly; by the by—" he added, turning round sharply again, "did you answer her question just now? are you happy or not?"

"No, no, no!" cried the prince, in unspeakably bitter tones.

"Ha, ha! I never supposed you would say 'yes,' you know," cried Rogojin, laughing disagreeably.

And so he disappeared, without taking the trouble to look round again.

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PART IV.

I.

A WEEK had elapsed since the rendezvous of two of our friends on the green bench in the park; when one fine morning, at about half past ten o'clock, Varvara Ardalionovna, otherwise known as Mrs. Ptitsin, who had been out to visit a friend, returned home in a state of considerable mental agitation and depression.

There are certain people of whom it is difficult to say anything which will at once throw them into relief, in other words, describe them graphically in their typical characteristics. These are they who are generally known as "commonplace people," and this class comprises of course the immense majority of mankind.

"Podkoleosin" was perhaps an exaggeration, viewed as a type, but he was by no means a non-existant character; on the contrary, how many intelligent people, after hearing of this Podkoleosin from Gogol, immediately began to find that scores and hundreds of their good friends were exactly like Podkoleosin. They knew, perhaps, before Gogol told them, that their friends were like Podkoleosin, but they were not aware, so to speak, that that was their exact name. As a rule, in real life, young fellows uncommonly seldom jump out of the window just before their weddings, because such a feat, not to speak of its other aspects, must be decidedly unpleasant to the performer; and yet there are plenty of bridegrooms, intelligent fellows too, who would be ready to confess themselves Podkoleosins in the depth of their consciousness, just before marriage. Nor does every husband feel bound to repeat at every step, "*Tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin!*" like another typical personage; and yet how many millions and billions of Georges Dandins there are in real life who feel inclined to utter this soul-drawn cry soon after their honeymoon, if not the day after the wedding. Therefore, without entering into any more serious examination of the question, I will content myself with remarking that in real life typical characters are "their own selves and water," so to speak; and all these Dandins and Podkoleosins actually exist and trot about among us everyday, but in a

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diluted form. I will just add, however, that Georges Dandin might have existed exactly as Molière presented him, and probably does exist now and then, though rarely; and so I will end this scientific examination, which is beginning to look horribly like a newspaper criticism. But for all this, the question remains, what are the wretched novelists to do with commonplace people, and how are they to be presented to the reader in such a form as to be in the least degree interesting to him? They cannot be left out altogether, for commonplace people meet one at every turn of life, and to leave them out would be to destroy the whole reality and "probability" of the story. To fill the novel with typical characters only, or with merely strange and uncommon people, would render the book unreal and improbable, and would very likely destroy the interest. In my opinion the duty of the novelist is to hunt up points of interest and instruction even in the characters of commonplace people.

For instance, when the whole essence of an ordinary person's nature lies in his unbroken and unchangeable commonplace of character;—and when in spite of all his endeavours to do something out of the common, this person ends, eventually, by remaining in his unbroken line of routine—I think such an individual really does receive some colouring of his own as a type—if it be but a type—of commonplace which will not for the world, if it can help it, be contented, but strains and yearns to be something original and independent, without the slightest claim to any sort of originality. To this class of commonplace people belong several characters in this my novel;—characters which—I admit—I have not drawn very vividly up to now for my reader's benefit.

Such were, for instance, Varvara Ardalionovna Ptitsin, her husband, Mr. Ptitsin, and her brother, Gania.

There is nothing so annoying as to be fairly rich, of a fairly good family, good presence, average education, to be "not stupid," kind hearted,—and yet to have no talent at all, no originality,—not a single idea of one's own—to be, in fact, "just like everyone else."

Of such people there are countless numbers in this world—far more even than appear. They are to be divided into two classes, as all men are—that is: into those of very limited intellect, and those who are "much cleverer." The former of these classes is the happier.

To a commonplace man of limited wit, for instance, nothing is simpler than to imagine himself an original character, and to

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enjoy himself in that belief without the slightest mental doubt upon the matter.

Many of our young women have thought fit to cut their hair short, put on blue spectacles, and call themselves Nihilists. By doing this they have been able to persuade themselves, without further trouble, that they have acquired new convictions of their own.

Others have but felt some little qualm of kindness towards their fellow-men, and the fact has been quite enough to persuade them that they stand alone in the van of the enlightenment and benefaction of the masses.

Others have but to read an idea of somebody else's, and they can immediately assimilate it and believe that it was a child of their own brain.

The "impudence of ingenuousness," if I may use the expression, developes to a wonderful pitch, in such cases;—unlikely as it appears, it is met with at every turn.

This confidence of a stupid man in his own talent has been wonderfully expressed by Gogol in his amazingly typical character of Pirogoff.

Pirogoff has not the slightest doubt of his own genius,—nay, of his *superiority* of genius,—so certain is he of it that he does not even question himself as to the matter. How many Pirogoff's have there not been among our writers—scholars—propagandists?—I say "have been," but indeed there are plenty of them at this very day.

Our friend, Gania, belonged to the other class—to the "much cleverer" persons, though he was from head to foot permeated and saturated with the longing to be original. This class, as I have said above, is far less happy. For the "clever commonplace" person, though he may possibly imagine himself a man of genius and originality, none the less has within his heart the deathless worm of suspicion of himself,—doubt! and this doubt sometimes brings a man to despair before he dies. As a rule, however, nothing half so tragic happens;—his liver becomes a little damaged in the course of time, nothing more serious than that. Such men do not give up their aspirations after originality without a severe struggle,—and there have been men who, though good fellows in themselves, and even benefactors to humanity, have sunk to the level of base criminals for the sake of originality.

Gania was a beginner, as it were, upon this road. The deep and unchangeable consciousness of his own lack of talent, combined with the vast longing he felt to be able to persuade

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himself that he was original, had sorely wounded his heart, even from his first childhood.

In his passionate desire to excel he often felt willing to take some rash step; and yet, having resolved upon such a step, when the moment arrived Gania invariably proved too sensible to take it. He was ready, in the same way, to do a mean action in order to obtain some wished-for object;—and yet, when the moment came to do it, he found that he was too honest for it after all. (Not that he objected to acts of petty meanness—he was always ready for *them*.) He looked with hate and loathing on poverty and on the downfall of his family.

Aglaya had simply frightened him; yet he did not give up all thoughts of her—though he never seriously hoped that she would condescend to him. At the time of his "adventure" with Nastasia Philipovna he had come to the conclusion that money was his only hope—money should do all for him.

At the moment when he lost Aglaya and after the scene with Nastasia, he had felt so low in his own eyes that he brought the money back to the prince, as we have seen. Of this returning of the money "given to him by a mad woman who had received it herself from a lunatic," he had often repented since—though he never ceased to be proud of his action. During the short time that the prince remained in Petersburg, Gania had had time to hate the former for his sympathy, though the fact was, as the prince said, that it was not everyone who would have acted as Gania did. He had long pondered, too, over his relations with Aglaya, and had persuaded himself that with such a strange, childish, innocent character as hers, he might have met with serious success. Remorse then seized him—he threw up his appointments, and buried himself in self-torment and reproach.

He lived at Ptitsin's, and openly showed contempt for the latter, though he always listened to his advice all the same, and was sensible enough to ask for it when he wanted it. Gavrila Ardalionovitch was angry with Ptitsin because the latter did not care to become a Rothschild. "If you are to be a Hebrew," he said, "do it properly—squeeze people right and left, show some character; if you are to be a Jew, be the King of the Jews while you are about it."

Ptitsin was quiet and not easily offended—he only laughed. But on one occasion he explained to Gania that he was no Jew—that he did nothing dishonest—that he could not help the market price of money; that thanks to his accurate habits

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and indulgence, he had a good footing and was respected in the trade, and that his business was flourishing. Nature loves such men as Ptitsin, and rewards them with good returns for their diligence and moderation.

Ptitsin sometimes tried to persuade Gania to enter service again. "You despise generals, you say, but you'll see that you'll end by being one yourself—men like you always do," he would say.

Varvara Ardalionovna, in spite of all former unpleasantnesses, had been anxious to help her brother and to be kind to him when his affairs fell into confusion. She extended her circle of friends for his sake. She went to the Epanchins'—whom she had known well and loved as a child—both she and Gania had played there as children.

Her final object was to bring Gania and Aglaya together once more. Perhaps she did some good towards this end, and, perhaps, she was but labouring for what could never happen—expecting that of her brother which he could never give; at all events, she worked scientifically, and sometimes for weeks at a stretch she would never even mention Gania's name; she always behaved candidly and simply with the Epanchin girls, however—though with great dignity.

To-day, as I have said above, she returned from the Epanchin household with a heavy feeling of pain at the heart. There was a sensation of bitterness, a sort of ironical contempt amid the pain which beset her.

Arrived at her own house, Varia heard a considerable commotion going on in the upper storey, and distinguished the voices of her father and brother. On entering the salon she found Gania pacing up and down at frantic speed, pale with rage and almost tearing his hair. She frowned and subsided on to the sofa with a tired air and without taking the trouble to divest herself of her hat. She very well knew that if she kept quiet a minute or two and asked her brother nothing about his reason for tearing up and down the room, his wrath would fall upon her head. So she hastened to put the question:

"The old affair, eh?"

"Old affair? no! Heaven knows what's up now—I don't; old affairs, indeed! Father has simply gone mad; mother's squalling away like—upon my word, Varia, I must kick him out of the house, or else go myself," he added, probably remembering that he could not well turn people out of a house which was not his own.

"You must make allowances," murmured Varia.

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"Make allowances? for whom? *him*—the old blackguard? No, no, Varia—that won't do! it won't do, I tell you! and look at the swagger of the man! He's all to blame himself, and yet he puts on so much 'side' that you'd think—my word! 'It's too much trouble to go through the gate, you must break the fence for me!' That's the sort of air he puts on; but what's the matter with you, Varia—what a curious expression you have put on to-day."

"I'm all right," said Varia, in a tone that sounded as though she were all wrong.

Gania looked more intently at her.

"You've been *there?*" he asked, suddenly.

"Yes."

"Did you find out anything?"

"Nothing unexpected. I discovered that it's all true. My husband was wiser than either of us. Just as he suspected and gave us to understand from the very beginning, so it has fallen out. Where is he?"

"Out. Well—what has happened?—go on."

"The prince is formally engaged—that's settled. The elder sisters told me all about it. Aglaya has agreed. They don't attempt to conceal the past any longer; you know how mysterious and secret they have all been up to now. Adelaida's wedding is put off again, so that both girls can be married in one day; isn't that delightfully romantic? Somebody ought to write a poem on it—it reads like verse. Sit down and write an ode on this subject instead of tearing up and down like that. This evening Princess Bielokonski is to arrive; she comes just in time—they have a party to-night. He is to be introduced to old Bielokonski, though I believe he knows her already; probably she will be informed openly. They are only afraid that he may knock something down, or trip over something when he comes into the room. He's clumsy enough."

Gania listened attentively, but to his sister's astonishment he was by no means so impressed with this news (which should, she thought, have been so important to him) as was to be expected.

"Well, it was clear enough all along," he said, after a moment's reflection. "So that's the end," he added, with a disagreeable smile, continuing to walk up and down the room, but much slower than before, and glancing into his sister's face with an unpleasant expression on his own.

"Come; it's a good thing that you take it philosophically at all events," said Varia.

"I'm really very glad of it, Varia."

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"Yes, it's off our hands—off *yours*, I should say. But I think I have served you faithfully—unquestioningly and untiringly. I never even asked you what happiness you expected to find in Aglaya."

"As if I ever did expect to find happiness in Aglaya?"

"Come, come, don't overdo your philosophy. Of course you did. Now it's all over, and a good thing too; pair of fools that we have been! I confess I have never been able to look at the business seriously. I busied myself in it for your sake, thinking that there was no knowing what might happen with a funny girl like that to deal with, and chiefly to comfort yourself and keep you cool. There were ninety to one chances against it. To this moment I can't make out why you wished for this union."

"H'm! now I suppose you and your husband will never weary of egging me on to serve again. You'll begin your lectures about 'obstinacy and strength of will' and all that. I know it all by heart," said Gania, bursting out laughing.

"He's got some new idea in his head," thought Varia.

"Are they pleased over there—the parents?" asked Gania, suddenly.

"N—no, I don't think they are. You can judge for yourself; I think the general is pleased enough; her mother is a little frightened; she always loathed the idea of the prince as a *husband;* everybody knows that."

"Of course, naturally. The bridegroom is an impossible and ridiculous one. I mean, has *she* given her formal consent?"

"She has not said 'no,' up to now, and that's all. It was sure to be so with her. You know what she is like. You know how shy she is, and easily shamed. You remember how she used to hide in a cupboard as a child so as to avoid seeing guests, for hours at a time. She is just the same now; but, do you know, I think there is something serious in the matter, even from her side; I feel it, somehow. She laughs at the prince, they say, from morn to night in order to hide her real feelings; but you may be sure she finds occasion to say something or other to him on the sly, for he himself is in a state of radiant happiness; he walks in the clouds; they say he is extremely funny just now; I heard it from themselves. They seemed to be laughing at *me* in their sleeves—those elder girls—I don't know why."

Gania had begun to frown, and probably Varia added this last sentence in order to probe his thought. However, at this moment, the row began again upstairs.

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"I'll turn him out!" shouted Gania, glad of the opportunity of venting his vexation; "I shall just turn him out—we can't have this."

"Yes, and then he'll go about the place and disgrace us as he did yesterday."

"How 'as he did yesterday?' What do you mean? What did he do yesterday? what do you mean?" asked Gania, in alarm.

"Why, goodness me, don't you know?"

"What? you really don't mean to say that he really did go *there* yesterday!" cried Gania, flushing red with shame and anger. "Good Heavens, Varia—speak; you have just been there. *Was* he there or not, *quick?*" and Gania rushed for the door. Varia followed and caught him by both hands.

"What are you doing? where are you going to? You can t let him go now; if you do he'll go and do a worse thing somewhere."

"What did he do there? what did he say?"

"They couldn't tell me themselves; they couldn't make head or tail of it; but he frightened them all. He came and asked for the general who was not at home; so he asked for Lizabetha Prokofievna. First of all, he begged her for some place, or situation, for work of some kind, and then he began to complain about *us*, about me and my husband, and you, especially *you*; he said a lot of things."

"Oh! couldn't you find out," muttered Gania, trembling hysterically.

"No—nothing better than that. Why, in the first place they probably couldn't understand him themselves; and in the second place they very likely didn't tell me all."

Gania seized his head in his hands and tottered to the window; Varia sat down at the other window.

"Funny girl, Aglaya," she observed, after a pause. "When she left me she said, 'Give my special and personal respects to your parents; I shall certainly find an opportunity to see your papa at a very early day,' and so serious over it! She's a strange girl."

"Wasn't she joking? She was speaking ironically."

"Not a bit of it: that's just the strange part of it."

"Did she know about father, do you think—or not?"

"That they do *not* know about it in the house is quite certain, the bulk of them, I mean; but you have given me a thought. Aglaya perhaps knows. She alone, though, if anyone, for the sisters were as astonished as I was to hear her

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speak so seriously about father. If she knows, the prince must have told her."

"Oh! it's not a great matter to guess who told her. A thief; a thief in our family, and the head of the family too!"

"Oh! nonsense," cried Varia, angrily. "That was nothing but a drunkard's tale. Nonsense; why, who invented the whole thing—Lebedeff and the prince—a pretty pair—both were probably drunk."

"Yes; father is a drunkard and a thief; I am a beggar, and the husband of my sister is a usurer," continued Gania, bitterly. "There was a pretty list of advantages with which to enchant the heart of Aglaya, truly lovely."

"That same husband of your sister the usurer—"

"Feeds me; go on. Don't stand on ceremony, pray."

"Don't lose your temper. You look just like a schoolboy. You think that all this sort of thing would harm you in Aglaya's eyes, do you? You little know her character. She is capable of dropping her 'young man' and running away and starving in a garret with some wretched student; that's the sort of girl she is. You never could or did understand how interesting you would have been in her eyes if you had come firmly and proudly through your misfortunes. The prince has simply caught her with a hook and line; firstly, because he never thought of fishing for her, and secondly, because he is an idiot in the eyes of most people. It's quite enough for her that by accepting him she puts her family out and annoys them all round—that's what she likes. You don't understand these things."

"We shall see whether I understand or no!" said Gania enigmatically. "But I shouldn't like her to know all about father, all the same. I thought the prince would manage to hold his tongue about this at least. He prevented Lebedeff spreading the news—he wouldn't even tell *me* all when I asked him—"

"Then you must see that he is not responsible. What does it matter to you now, in any case? What are you hoping for still? if you *have* a hope left it is that your suffering air may soften her heart towards you."

"Oh, she would funk a scandal—you are all tarred with one brush!"

"What! *Aglaya* would have funked? You are a wretched hearted fellow, Gania!" said Varia, looking intently at her brother's face. "Not one of us is worth much. Aglaya may be a wild sort of a girl, but she is far nobler than any of us, a thousand times nobler!"

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"Well—come! there's nothing to get cross about," said Gania.

"All I'm afraid of is—mother; I'm afraid this scandal about father may come to her ears; perhaps it has already, I am dreadfully afraid."

"It undoubtedly has already!" observed Gania.

Varia had risen from her place and had started to go upstairs to her mother; but at this observation of Gania's she turned and gazed at him attentively.

"Who could have told her?"

"Hippolyte probably. He thought it the most delightful amusement in the world to tell her of it the instant he moved over here; I haven't a doubt of it."

"But how *could* he know anything of it? tell me that. Lebedeff and the prince determined to tell no one—even Colia knows nothing about it."

"What, Hippolyte? he found it out himself, of course; why, you have no idea what a cunning little animal of a fellow that is; dirty little gossip! he has the most extraordinary nose for smelling out other people's secrets, or anything approaching to scandal. Believe it or not; but I'm pretty sure he has taken Aglaya into his confidence, if he hasn't, he soon will. Rogojin is in intimate connection with him, too. How the prince doesn't notice it, I can't understand. The little wretch considers me his enemy now and does his best to catch me tripping; what on earth does it matter to him, when he's dying? However, you'll see; *I* shall catch *him* tripping yet, and not he me."

"Why did you get him over here if you hate him so? and is it really worth your while to watch him for the sake of catching him out?"

"Why, it was yourself advised me to bring him over!"

"I thought it might be useful. You know he is in love with Aglaya himself, now, and has written to her; he has even written to Lizabetha Prokofievna."

"Oh! he's not dangerous there!" cried Gania, laughing angrily, "However, I believe there is something of that sort in the air; he is very likely to be in love, for he is a mere boy; but he won't write anonymous letters to the old lady; that would be too base and audacious a thing for him to attempt; but I dare swear the very first thing he did was to show *me* up to Aglaya as a base deceiver and intriguer. I confess I was fool enough to attempt a little plotting through him at first; I thought he would throw himself into my service out of revengeful feelings towards

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the prince, the cunning little animal; but I know him better now. As for the theft, he may have heard of it from the widow in Petersburg, for if the old man prostituted himself to such an act, he can have done it for no other object but to give the money to her. Hippolyte came and said to me without any prelude that 'the general' had promised the widow four hundred roubles. Of course I understood how the cat jumped, and the little wretch looked at me with a nasty sort of look of satisfaction. I know him; you may depend upon it he went and told mother too, for the pleasure of wounding her heart. And why doesn't he die, I should like to know? He undertook to die within three weeks and here he is getting fatter. His cough is better too. It was only yesterday that he said that was the second day he hadn't coughed blood."

"Well, turn him out!"

"I don't *hate*, I despise him," said Gania grandly. "Well, I *do* hate him, then, if you like!" he added, with sudden access of rage, "and I'll tell him so to his face, even when he's dying on his pillow, if you like. If you had but read his confession, my goodness! what refinement of impudence. Oh, but I'd have liked to whip him then and there, like a schoolboy, just to see how surprised he would have been. Now he hates everybody because he couldn't— Oh, I say, what on earth are they doing there! listen to that noise; I really can't stand this any longer. Ptitsin!" he cried, as the latter worthy entered the room, "what in the name of goodness are we coming to? listen to that—"

But the noise came rapidly nearer, the door burst open and old General Ivolgin raging, furious, purple-faced, and trembling with anger rushed in and directed his steps towards Ptitsin. He was followed by Nina Alexandrovna, Colia, and behind the rest, Hippolyte.

II.

HIPPOLYTE had now been five days at the Ptitsins'. His flitting from the prince's to these new quarters had been brought about quite naturally and without many words. He did not quarrel with the prince—in fact, they seemed to part friends. Gania, who had been hostile enough on that

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eventful evening, had himself come to fetch him a couple of days later, probably in obedience to some sudden impulse or idea. For some reason or other, Rogojin too had begun to visit the sick boy. The prince thought it might be better for him to move away from his (the prince's) house. Hippolyte had informed him, as he took his leave, that Mr. Ptitsin "had been kind enough to offer him a corner," and had not said a word about Gania, though Gania had procured his invitation and himself came to fetch him away. Gania noticed this fact at the time, and put it to Hippolyte's debit in account. Gania was right when he told his sister that Hippolyte was getting better; that he was better was clear at the first glance.

He entered the room now last of all, deliberately, and with a disagreeably ironical smile on his lips.

Nina Alexandrovna came in, looking frightened. She had changed much since we last saw her, half a year ago. She had grown very thin and pale. Colia looked preoccupied and perplexed. He could not understand the vagaries of the general, and knew nothing of the last achievement of that worthy, which had caused so much commotion in the house. But he could see that his father had of late changed very much for the worse; that he had begun to behave in so extraordinary a fashion both at home and abroad that he was not like the same man. What perplexed and disturbed him as much as anything else was that his father had entirely given up drinking during the last few days. Colia knew that the old man had broken, if not quarrelled, with both Lebedeff and the prince. He (Colia) had just bought a small bottle of Vodki and brought it home for his father.

"Really, mother," he had assured Nina Alexandrovna upstairs, "really you had better let him drink. He has not had a drop for three days; he must be suffering agonies—"

The general now entered the room, threw the door wide open, and stood on the threshold trembling with indignation.

"Look here, my dear sir," he began, addressing Ptitsin in a very loud tone of voice; "if you have really made up your mind to sacrifice an old man—your father too, and at all events father of your wife—an old man who has served his emperor—to a wretched little atheist like this, all I can say is, sir, my foot shall cease to tread your floors. Make your choice, sir; make your choice quickly, if you please: me or this—screw. Yes, screw, sir; I said it accidentally, but let the word stand—this *screw*, for he screws and drills himself into my soul—"

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"Hadn't you better say corkscrew?" said Hippolyte.

"No, sir, *not* corkscrew. I am a general, not a bottle, sir. Make your choice, sir—me or him."

Here Colia handed him a chair, and he subsided into it, almost fainting with rage.

"Hadn't you better—better—take a nap?" murmured the stupified Ptitsin.

"A nap?" shrieked the general. "I am not drunk, sir; you insult me. I see," he continued, rising, "I see that all are against me here. Enough—I go; but know, sirs—know that—"

He was not allowed to finish his sentence; somebody pushed him back into his chair, and begged him to be calm. Nina Alexandrovna trembled and cried quietly. Gania retired to the window in disgust.

"But what have I done? what is his grievance?" asked Hippolyte, showing his teeth.

"What have you done, indeed?" put in Nina Alexandrovna. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, teasing an old man like that—and in your position, too."

"And pray what *is* my position, madame? I have the greatest respect for you, personally; but—"

"He's a little screw," cried the general; "he drills holes in my heart and soul. He wishes me to be a pervert to atheism. Know, you young greenhorn, that I was covered with honours before ever you were born; and you are nothing better than a wretched little worm, cut in two with coughing, and dying slowly of your own malice and unbelief. What did Gavrila bring you over here for? They're all against me, from the strangers to my own son—all against me."

"Oh come—nonsense!" cried Gania; "if you did not go shaming us all over the town, things might be better for all parties."

"What—shame you? I?—what do you mean, you young calf? *I* shame you? I can only do you honour, sir; I cannot shame you."

He jumped up from his chair in a fit of uncontrollable rage. Gania was very angry too.

"Honour, indeed!" said the latter, with angry contempt.

"What do you say, sir?" growled the general, taking a step towards him.

"I say that I have but to open my mouth, and you—" Gania began, but did not finish. The two—father and son—stood before one another, both unspeakably agitated, especially Gania.

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"Gania, Gania, reflect!" cried his mother hurriedly.

"It's all nonsense on both sides," said Varia angrily; "let them alone, mother."

"It's only for mother's sake that I spare him," said Gania tragically.

"Speak," said the general, beside himself with rage and excitement; "speak—but under the penalty of a father's curse."

"Oh, father's curse be hanged—you don't frighten me that way!" said Gania. "Whose fault is it that you have been as mad as a march hare all this week? It is just a week—you see I count the days. Take care now; don't provoke me too much, or I'll tell all. Why did you go to the Epanchins' yesterday—tell me that? And you call yourself an old man, too, with grey hair, and father of a family! H'm—nice sort of a father."

"Be quiet, Gania," cried Colia; "shut up, you fool!"

"Yes, but how have *I* offended him?" repeated Hippolyte, and still in the same unpleasantly ironical tone of voice. "Why does he call me a screw? You all heard it. He came to me himself and began telling me about some Captain Eropegoff. I don't wish for your company, general. I always avoided you—you know that. What have *I* to do with Captain Eropegoff? All I did was to express my opinion that probably Captain Eropegoff never existed at all!"

"Of course he never existed!" Gania interrupted.

But the general only stood stupified and gazed around in a dazed way. Gania's speech had impressed him with its terrible candour. For the first moment or two he could find no words to answer him, and it was only when Hippolyte burst out laughing and said:

"There, you see! even your own son supports my statement that there never was such a person as Captain Eropegoff!" it was only on hearing this that the old fellow muttered confusedly:

"Kapiton Eropegoff—not Captain Eropegoff!—Kapiton—major retired—Eropegoff—Kapiton."

"Kapiton didn't exist either!" persisted Gania maliciously.

"How! how didn't exist?" cried the poor general, and a deep blush suffused his face.

"That'll do, Gania!" cried Varia and Ptitsin.

"Shut up, Gania!" said Colia.

But this protection seemed to rekindle the general.

"What do you mean, sir, that he didn't exist? explain yourself," he repeated angrily.

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"Because he didn't exist—never could and never did—there! you'd better drop the subject, I warn you!"

"And this is my son—my own son—whom I—oh, gracious heaven! Eropegoff—Eroshka Eropegoff didn't exist!"

"Ha, ha! it's Eroshka now," laughed Hippolyte.

"No sir, Kapiton, Kapitoshka—not Eroshka. Kapiton Alexeyevitch—retired major—married Maria Petrovna Lu—Lu—he was my friend and companion—Lutugoff—from our earliest cornetcy. I closed his eyes for him—he was killed. Kapiton Eropegoff never existed! tfu!"

The general shouted in his fury; but from his answer it was to be concluded that the old fellow's wrath was not kindled by the expressed doubt as to Kapiton's existence. This was his scapegoat; but his excitement was caused by something quite different. As a rule he would have merely shouted down the doubt as to Kapiton, told a long yarn about his friend, and eventually retired upstairs to his room. But to-day, in the strange uncertainty of human nature, it seemed to require but so small offence as this to make his cup to overflow. The old man grew purple in the face, he raised his hands, "Enough of this!" he yelled. "My curse—away, out of the house I go! Colia, bring my bag, away!" He left the room hastily and in a paroxysm of rage.

His wife, Colia and Ptitsin ran out after him.

"What have you done now?" said Varia to Gania. "He'll probably be making off *there* again! what a shame it all is."

"Well, he shouldn't steal," cried Gania, panting with fury. And just at this moment his eye met Hippolyte's. "As for you, sir!" he cried, "you should at least remember that you are in a strange house and—receiving hospitality; you should not take the opportunity of tormenting an old man, sir, who is too evidently off his head."

Hippolyte looked furious too, but he restrained himself.

"I don't quite agree with you in your opinion that your father has lost his head," he observed quietly; "on the contrary, I cannot help thinking he has been less demented than usual of late. You don't think so? he has grown so cunning and careful, and weighs his words so deliberately; he spoke to me about that Kapiton fellow with an object, you know! just fancy—he wanted to—"

"Oh, devil take what he wanted you to do! don't try to be too cunning with me, young man!" shouted Gania. "If you are aware of the real reason for my father's present condition (and you have kept such an excellent spying watch during

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these last few days that you are sure to be aware of it)—you had no right whatever to torment the—unfortunate man, and to worry my mother by your exaggerations of the affair; because the whole business is nonsense—simply a drunken story and nothing more, quite unproved by any evidence, and I don't believe that much of it!" (he snapped his fingers). "But you must needs spy and watch over us all, because you are a—a—"

"Screw!" laughed Hippolyte.

"Because you are a humbug, sir; and thought fit to worry people for half-an-hour and tried to frighten them into believing that you would shoot yourself with your little empty pistol, pirouetting about and playing at suicide, to let a little of your overflow bile escape. *I* gave you hospitality, you have fattened on it, your cough has left you, and you repay all this—"

"Excuse me—two words! I am Varvara Ardalionovna's guest, not yours; *you* have extended no hospitality to me; on the contrary—if I am not mistaken, I believe you are yourself indebted to Mr. Ptitsin's hospitality. Four days ago I begged my mother to come down here and find a lodging for me, because I certainly do feel better now, though I am *not* fatter, nor have I ceased to cough. I am to-day informed that my room is ready for me; therefore, having thanked your sister and mother for their kindness to me, I intend to leave the house this very evening. I beg your pardon—I interrupted you—I think you were about to add something?"

"Oh—if that is the state of affairs—" began Gania.

"Excuse me—I will take a seat," interrupted Hippolyte once more, sitting done deliberately; "for I am not strong yet. Now then, I am ready to hear you. Especially as this is the last chance we shall have of a talk, and very likely the last meeting we shall ever have at all."

Gania felt a little guilty.

"I assure you I did not mean to reckon up debits and credits," he began, "and if you—"

"I don't understand your condescension," said Hippolyte; "as for me, I promised myself, on the very first day of my arrival in this house, that I would have the satisfaction of settling accounts with you in a very thorough manner before I said good-bye to you. I intend to perform this operation now, if you like; after you, though, of course."

"May I ask you to be so good as to clear out of this room?"

"You'd better speak out. You'll be sorry afterwards if you don't."

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"Hippolyte, stop please, stop this, like a good fellow," said Varia.

"Well, only for the sake of the ladies then," said Hippolyte, laughing. "I am ready to put off the reckoning, but only put it off, Varvara Ardalionovna, because an explanation between your brother and myself has become an absolute necessity, and I could never think of leaving the house without clearing up all perplexities first."

"In a word, you are a wretched little gossip!" cried Gania, "and you cannot go away without having had a parting shot of scandal at me."

"You see," said Hippolyte, coolly, "you can't restrain yourself; you'll be dreadfully sorry afterwards if you don't speak out now. Come, you shall have first say, I'll wait."

Gania was silent and merely looked contemptuously at him.

"You won't? very well. I shall be as short as possible for my part. Two or three times to-day I have had the word 'hospitality' pushed down my throat; this is not right. In inviting me here you yourself took me in a net for your own use; you thought I wished to revenge myself upon the prince. You heard that Aglaya had been kind to me and read my confession. Making sure that I should give myself up to your interests, you hoped that you might get some assistance out of me; I will not go into details. I don't ask either admission or confirmation of this from yourself; I am quite content to leave you to your conscience, and to feel that we understand one another capitally."

"My word, what a history you are weaving out of the most ordinary of circumstances!" cried Varia.

"I told you the fellow was nothing but a wretched little gossip," said Gania.

"Excuse me, Varia Ardalionovna, I will proceed. I can, of course, neither love nor respect the prince, though he is a good enough hearted fellow, if a little queer. But there is no need whatever for me to hate him. I quite understood your brother when he first offered me aid against the prince, though I did not show it; I knew well that your brother was making a ridiculous mistake in me. I am ready to help him, however, even now; but solely out of respect for yourself, Varvara Ardalionovna.

"Having now shown you that I am not quite such a fool as I look and that I have to be fished for with a rod and line for a good long while before I am caught, I will proceed to explain why I specially wished to make a fool of your brother here.

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That my motive power is hate I do not attempt to conceal. I have felt that before dying (and I *am* dying, howsoever much better and fatter I may appear to you), I must absolutely make a fool of, at least, *one* of that countless class of men which has dogged me all my life, which I hate so cordially and which is so prominently represented by your much esteemed brother. I should not enjoy paradise nearly so much without having done this first.

"I hate you, Gavrila Ardalionovitch, solely (this may seem curious to you, but I repeat) solely because you are the type, and incarnation, and head, and crown of the most impudent, the most self-satisfied, the most detestable form of commonplace. You are routine of the routine, you have no chance of ever fathering the pettiest idea of your own.

"And yet you are as jealous and conceited as you can possibly be; you consider yourself a great genius, of this you are persuaded, although there are dark moments of doubt and rage, when even this fact seems uncertain; there are points of darkness on your horizon, and of this I am glad; in the first place you will never gain a certain much-desired end, I mean a certain person."

"Come, come! this is intolerable! you had better stop this, you little mischief-making wretch!" cried Varia. Gania had grown very pale; he trembled but said nothing.

Hippolyte paused and looked at Gania intently, and with great gratification.

He then turned his gaze upon Varia, grinned, bowed, and went out, without adding another word.

Gania might justly complain of the hardness with which fate treated him.

Varia dared not speak to him for a long while, as he strode past her, backwards and forwards. At last he went and stood at the window, looking out, with his back turned towards her. There was a fearful row going on upstairs again.

"Are you off?" said Gania, suddenly, remarking that she had risen and was about to leave the room. "Wait a moment —look at this."

He approached the table and laid a small sheet of note-paper before her. It looked like a little note.

"Good heavens!" cried Varia, raising her hands.

This was the note:

"Gavrila Ardalionovitch,—Persuaded of your kindness of heart and goodness, I have determined to ask your advice

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on a matter of great importance to myself. I should like to meet you to-morrow morning at seven o'clock on the little green bench in the park. It is not far from our house. Varvara Ardalionovna, who *must* accompany you, knows the place well.

"A. E."

"There! what on earth are you to make of a girl like that?" said Varia.

Gania, little as he felt inclined for swagger at this moment, could not avoid showing his triumph, especially just after such humiliating remarks as those of Hippolyte.

A smile of self-satisfaction beamed on his face, and Varia too was all brimming over with joyful pride.

"And this is the very day that they began to talk about the engagement. What are you to do with a girl like that—eh?"

"What do you suppose she wants to talk about to-morrow?" asked Gania.

"Oh, *that's* all the same. The chief thing is that she will see you after six months' absence from one another. Look here, Gania, this is a *serious* business, mind. Don't swagger again and lose the game—play carefully but don't *funk*, do you understand? As if she could possibly avoid seeing what I have been working for all this last six months. And just imagine, I was there this morning and *not a word* of this. I was there, you know, on the sly. The old lady did not know I was there or she would have kicked me out. I ran some risk for you, you see. I did so want to find out at all hazards."

Here there was a frantic noise upstairs once more; several people seemed to be rushing downstairs at once.

"Now Gania," cried Varia, frightened out of her wits, "we can't let him go out so. We can't afford to have a breath of scandal about the town at this moment; run after him and beg his pardon—quick."

But the father of the family was out in the road already. Colia was carrying his bag for him; Nina Alexandrovna stood and cried on the doorstep; she wanted to run after the old general, but Ptitsin kept her back.

"You will only excite him more," said the latter. "He has nowhere else to go to—he'll be back here in half-an-hour. I've talked it all over with Colia; let him play the fool a bit, it will do him good."

"What are you up to? Where are you off to? You've nowhere to go to, you know," cried Colia out of the window.

"Come back, father; the neighbours will hear," cried Varia.

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The general stopped, turned round, raised his hands and remarked:

"My curse be upon this house!"

"Which observation should always be made in as theatrical a tone as possible," muttered Gania, shutting the window with a bang.

The neighbours undoubtedly did hear. Varia rushed out of the room.

No sooner had his sister left him alone, than Gania took the note out of his pocket and kissed it.

III.

As a general rule, old General Ivolgin's paroxysms ended in smoke. He had before this experienced fits of sudden nonsensical fury, but not very often, because the man was a man of peace by nature, and a person of good enough disposition. He had flown into passions many a time of late years on account of the discomforts and worries of his home life during that period; but he had always shed tears after a short indulgence of temper, remembered that he was father of the family, and made it up with his wife again. He worshipped Nina Alexandrovna for forgiving him so much as she did, and for loving him through all his vagaries and humiliating weaknesses.

But on this occasion there was something more serious than usual in the row. Everyone seemed to *know something*, but to be afraid to talk about it.

The general had turned up in the bosom of his family two or three days before, but not, as usual, with the olive branch of peace in his hand, not in the garb of penitence—in which he was usually clad on such occasions—but, on the contrary, in an uncommonly bad temper.

He had arrived in a quarrelsome mood, pitching into everyone he came across, and talking about all sorts and kinds of subjects in the most unexpected manner, so that it was impossible for the outsider to discover what it was that was really putting him out. At moments he would be apparently quite bright and happy; but as a rule he would sit moody and thoughtful, quite unaware of the nature of his own thoughts, however. If asked he would abruptly commence to hold

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forth about the Epanchins, about Lebedeff, or the prince, suddenly stopping short and refusing to speak another word, answering all further questions with a stupid smile, unconscious equally of the fact that he was smiling, and that he had been asked a question. The whole of the previous night he had spent tossing about and groaning, and poor Nina Alexandrovna had been busy making cold compresses and warm fomentations and so on, without being very clear how to apply them; he had fallen asleep after a while, but not for long, and had awaked in a state of violent hypochondria which had ended in his quarrel with Hippolyte, and the solemn cursing of Ptitsin's establishment generally. It was also observed of him during these two or three days that he was in a continuous state of jealous ambition, and was specially touchy on all points of honour. Colia insisted, in discussing the matter with his mother, that all this was but the outcome of abstinence from all drink, or perhaps pining after Lebedeff, with whom up to this time the general had been upon terms of the greatest friendship; but with whom, for some reason or other, he had quarrelled a few days since, and from whom he had parted in great wrath: there had also been a scene with the prince. Colia had asked an explanation of the latter, but had been forced to conclude that he was not told the whole truth.

If Hippolyte and Nina Alexandrovna had, as Gania suspected, had a conversation of a certain sort as to the general's actions, it was strange that the former malicious little wretch, whom Gania had called a scandal-monger to his face, had not allowed himself a similar satisfaction with Colia.

The fact is, probably Hippolyte was not quite so bad as Gania painted him; and it was hardly likely that he had informed Nina Alexandrovna of certain events, of which we know, for the mere pleasure of giving her pain. We must never forget that human motives are generally far more complicated than we are apt to suppose, and that we can very rarely accurately describe the motives of another.

It is much better for the writer, as a rule, to content himself with the bare statement of events; and we shall take this alternative as to any further explanation of the catastrophe recorded above, and shall merely state the remaining events connected with the general's trouble shortly and barely, because we feel that we have already given to this secondary character, in our novel, more attention than we originally intended.

The course of events had marched in the following order. When Lebedeff returned in company with the general after their

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expedition to town, a few days since, for the purpose of investigation, he brought the prince no information whatever. If the latter had not been himself occupied with other thoughts and impressions at the time, he must have observed that Lebedeff not only was very uncommunicative, but even appeared to avoid him as much as possible.

When the prince did give the matter a little attention, he recalled the fact, that during the last day or two he had always found Lebedeff to be in the most radiantly good spirits, when they happened to meet; and further, that the general and Lebedeff were always together. The two friends did not seem to be parted for a moment—all day.

Occasionally the prince heard loud talking and laughing upstairs, and once he detected the sound of a jolly soldier's song going on above, and recognized the unmistakable bass of the general's voice. But the sudden outbreak of song did not last,—it soon broke off; and for an hour afterwards the animated sound of apparently drunken conversation continued to be heard from above. At length there was the clearest evidence of a grand mutual embracing and "flare up" of friendship, and someone burst into tears.

Shortly after this, however, there was a violent quarrel with loud talking on both sides; violent, but short lived.

All these days Colia had been in a state of great mental preoccupation.

The prince was usually out all day, and only came home late at night. On his return he was invariably informed that Colia had been looking for him all day. However, when the prince and Colia did meet, the latter never had anything particular to tell him, excepting that he was highly dissatisfied with the general and his present condition of mind and behaviour.

"They drag each other about the place," he said, "and get drunk together at the 'pub,' close by here, and quarrel in the streets on the way home, and embrace one another after it, and don't seem to part with each other for a moment."

When the prince pointed out that there was nothing new about that, for that they had always behaved in this manner together, Colia did not know what to say next; in fact he did not know what it was that specially worried him, just now, about his father.

On the morning following the bacchanalian songs and quarrels recorded above, as the prince stepped out of the house at about eleven o'clock, the general suddenly appeared before him, much agitated, almost in a trembling condition.

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"I have long sought the honour and opportunity of meeting you—much esteemed Lef Nicolaievitch," he murmured, pressing the prince's hand very hard, almost painfully so; "long—very long."

The prince begged him to step in and sit down.

"No—I will not sit down,—I am keeping you I see,—another time!—I think I may be permitted to congratulate you upon the realization of your heart's best wishes, is it not so?"

"What best wishes?"

The prince blushed. He thought, as so many in his position do, that nobody had seen, heard, noticed, or understood anything.

"Oh—be easy, sir, be easy! I shall not agitate your tenderest feelings. I've been through it all myself, and I know well how unpleasant it is when an outsider sticks his nose in where he is not wanted. I experience this last fact every morning. I came to speak to you about another matter, though an important matter enough. A very important matter, prince."

The latter requested him to take a seat once more, and sat down himself.

"Well—just for one second then. The fact is, I came for advice. Of course I live now without any very practical objects in life; but, being full of self respect, in which quality the ordinary Russian is so deficient as a rule, and of practical activity, I am desirous, in a word, prince, of placing myself and my wife and children in a position of—in fact, I want advice."

The prince commended his aspirations with warmth.

"Quite so—quite so! but this is all mere nonsense; I came here to speak of something quite different, something very important, prince. And I have determined to come to you as to a man in whose sincerity and nobility of feeling, I can trust like—like,—are you surprised at my words, prince?"

The prince was watching his guest—if not with much surprise, at all events with great attention and curiosity.

The old man was very pale; every now and then his lips trembled, and his hands seemed unable to rest quietly, but continually moved from place to place. He had twice already jumped up from his chair and sat down again without being in the least aware of it. He would take up a book from the table and open it—talking all the while,—look at the heading of a chapter, shut it aud put it back again, seizing another immediately, but holding it unopened in his hand, and waving it in the air as he spoke.

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"But enough!" he cried, suddenly; "I see I have been boring you with my—"

"Not in the least—not in the least—I assure you. On the contrary, I am listening most attentively, and am anxious to guess—"

"Prince, I wish to place myself in a respectable position—I wish to respect myself—and to—"

"My dear sir, a man of such noble aspirations is worthy of all esteem by virtue of those aspirations alone."

The prince brought out this "copy-book sentence" in the firm belief that it would produce a good effect. He felt instinctively that some such well-sounding humbug, brought out at the proper moment, would soothe and anoint the old man's feelings, and would be specially acceptable to just such a man in just such a position.

At all hazards, his guest must be despatched with heart relieved and spirit comforted; that was the problem before the prince at this moment.

The phrase flattered him, touched him, and pleased him mightily. The general immediately changed his tone, and started off on a long and solemn explanation. But listen as he would, the prince could neither make head nor tail out of it.

The general spoke hotly and quickly for ten minutes; he spoke as though his words could not keep pace with his crowding thoughts and ideas. Tears stood in his eyes, and yet his speech was nothing but a collection of disconnected sentences, without beginning and without end—a string of unexpected words and unexpected sentiments—colliding with one another, and jumping over one another as they trooped out of his mouth.

"Enough!" he concluded at last, "you understand me, and that is the great thing; a heart like yours cannot help understanding the sufferings of another. Prince, you are the ideal of generosity; what are other men beside yourself? But you are young—accept my blessing. My principal object is to beg you to fix an hour for a most important conversation—that is my great hope, prince. My heart needs but a little friendship and affection, and yet I cannot always find means to satisfy it."

"But why not now? I am ready to listen, and—"

"No, no—prince, not now. I must have an hour to myself; it is to be the hour of Fate to me—*my own* hour. Our interview is not to be broken in upon by every chance comer, every impertinent guest—even by that stupid, impertinent—" (he bent

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over and whispered mysteriously, with a funny, frightened look in his face), "that most insolent humbug of all—who is unworthy to tie your shoe, prince; I don't say *mine*, mind—you will understand me, prince. Only *you* understand me, prince—no one else. *He* doesn't understand me, he is absolutely—*absolutely* unable to sympathize. The first qualification for understanding another is Heart."

The prince was rather alarmed at all this, and was obliged to end by appointing the same hour of the following day for the interview desired.

The general left him much comforted and far less agitated than when he had entered the room.

At seven in the evening, the prince sent to request Lebedeff to pay him a visit.

Lebedeff came at once, and "esteemed it an honour," as he observed, the instant he entered the room. He acted as though there had never been the slightest suspicion of the fact that he had systematically avoided the prince for the last three days.

He sat down on the edge of his chair smiling, and turning, and making faces, and rubbing his hands, and looking as though he were in delighted expectation of hearing some important communication, which had been long expected, and guessed by all.

The prince was instantly covered with confusion; for it appeared to be plain that every one expected something of him—that everybody looked at him as though anxious to congratulate him, and greeted him with hints, and smiles, and knowing looks.

Keller, for instance, had run into the house three times of late, "just for a moment," and each time with the air of desiring to offer his congratulations. Colia, too, in spite of his melancholy, had once or twice begun sentences in much the same strain of suggestion or insinuation.

The prince, however, immediately began, with some show of annoyance, to question Lebedeff categorically, as to the general's present condition, and his opinion thereon. He described the morning's interview in a few words.

"Everyone has his worries, prince, especially in these strange and troublous times of ours," Lebedeff replied drily, and with the air of a man disappointed of his reasonable expectations.

"Dear me! what a philosopher you are!" laughed the prince.

"Philosophy is necessary, sir—*very* necessary—in our day.

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It is too much neglected. As for me, much esteemed prince, I am sensible of having experienced the honour of your confidence in a certain matter up to a certain point, but never beyond that point: I do not for a moment complain—"

"Lebedeff, you seem to be angry for some reason!" said the prince.

"Not the least bit in the world, esteemed and revered prince! not the least bit in the world!" cried Lebedeff solemnly with his hand upon his heart. "On the contrary I am too painfully aware that neither by my position in the world, nor by gifts of intellect and heart, nor by my riches, nor by any former conduct of mine have I in any way deserved your confidence, your confidence which is far above my highest aspirations and hopes. Oh no, prince; I may serve you, but only as your humble slave! I am not angry, oh no; not angry; pained perhaps, but nothing more."

"My dear Lebedeff, I—"

"Oh, nothing more, nothing more! I was saying to myself but now, 'I am quite unworthy of friendly relations with him,' says I; 'but perhaps as landlord of this house I may, at some future date, in his good time, receive information as to certain imminent and much to be desired changes—'"

So saying Lebedeff fixed the prince with his sharp little eyes, still in hope that he should get his curiosity satisfied.

The prince looked back at him in amazement.

"I simply don't understand what you are driving at!" cried the latter, almost angrily, "and, and—what a terrible gossip you are, Lebedeff!" he added, bursting into a fit of most simple-hearted laughter.

Lebedeff followed suit at once, and it was clear from his radiant face that he considered his prospects of satisfaction immensely improved.

"And do you know what," the prince continued, "I am amazed at your naive ways, Lebedeff; don't be angry with me, not only yours, everybody else's also! You are waiting to hear something from me at this very moment with such exquisite naiveness, that I declare I feel quite ashamed of myself for having nothing whatever to tell you; I swear to you solemnly, that there is nothing to tell, there! can you take that in?" The prince laughed again.

Lebedeff assumed an air of dignity. It was true enough that he was sometimes naive to a degree in his curiosity; but he was also an excessively cunning gentleman, and the prince was rapidly converting him into an enemy by his repeated rebuffs.

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The prince did not snub Lebedeff's curiosity, however, because he felt any contempt for the latter; but simply because the subject was too delicate to talk about. He considered certain sweet hopes and thoughts of his as so many crimes committed, and was therefore perfectly right in his statement that he had "nothing to tell." But Lebedeff considered the refusal as caused by personal dislike to himself and was hurt accordingly. Indeed there was at this moment a piece of news, most interesting to the prince himself, which Lebedeff knew and longed to tell the latter, but which he kept obstinately to himself.

"And what can I do for you, esteemed prince? since I am told you sent for me just now," he said after a few moments' silence.

"Oh, it was about the general," began the prince waking up abruptly from the fit of musing which he too had indulged in; "and—and about the theft you told me off?"

"That is—er—about—*what* theft?"

"Oh come! just as if you didn't understand my allusion; my goodness, Lukian Timofeyevitch, what are you all up to? I can't make you out! The money, the money, sir! the four hundred roubles that you lost that day, in a purse; you came and told me about it, one morning—and then went off to Petersburg; there, *now* do you understand?"

"Oh—h—h! you mean the four hundred roubles!" said Lebedeff, dragging the words out, just as though it had only just dawned upon him what the prince was talking about. "Thanks very much, prince, for your kind interest—you do me too much honour; I found the money, sir, long ago!"

"You found it? thank God for that!"

"Your exclamation proves the generous sympathy of your nature, prince; for four hundred roubles—to a poor struggling family man like myself—is no small matter!"

"I didn't mean that, at least of course I'm glad for your sake, too," added the prince, correcting himself, "but—how did you find it?"

"Very simple indeed! I found it under the chair upon which my coat had hung; so that it is clear the purse simply fell out of the pocket and on to the floor!"

"Under the chair? impossible! Why, you told me yourself that you had searched every corner of the room? How could you have avoided looking in the most likely place of all?"

"Of course I looked there, sir—of course I did! Very much so! I looked and scrambled about, and felt for it and wouldn't

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believe it was not there and looked again and again; it is always so, sir, in similar cases; one longs and expects to find a lost article; one sees it is not there and the place is as bare as my palm; and yet one returns and looks again and again, fifteen or twenty times likely enough!"

"Oh, quite so, of course; but how was it in your case?—I don't quite understand," said the bewildered prince; "you say it wasn't there at first and that you searched the place thoroughly, and yet it turned up on that very spot!"

"Yes, sir—on that very spot."

The prince gazed strangely at Lebedeff.

"And the general?" he asked abruptly.

"The—the general? how do you mean, the general?" said Lebedeff dubiously, as though he had not taken in the drift of the prince's remark.

"Oh, good Heavens! I mean, what did the general say when the purse turned up under the chair? You and he had searched for it together there, hadn't you?"

"Quite so—together! but the second time I thought better to say nothing about finding it; I found it all alone."

"But—why in the world—and the money? was it all there?"

"I opened the purse and counted it myself; right to a single rouble."

"Well, I think you might have come and told me," said the prince thoughtfully.

"Oh—I didn't like to disturb you, prince, in the midst of your private and doubtless most interesting personal reflections. Besides I wanted to appear, myself, to have found nothing; I took the purse, and opened it and counted the money, and shut it and put it down again under the chair."

"What in the world for?"

"Oh, just so, out of pure curiosity," said Lebedeff, rubbing his hands and sniggering.

"What, it's still there then, is it? ever since the day before yesterday?"

"Oh, no! you see I was half in hopes the general might find it. Because if *I* found it, why should not he too observe an object lying before his very eyes? I moved the chair several times so as to expose the purse to view, but the general never observed it for several days. He is very absent just now, evidently. He talks and laughs and tell stories, and suddenly flies into a rage with me, goodness knows why."

"Well, but—have you taken the purse away now?"

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"No, it disappeared from under the chair in the night."

"Where is it now, then?"

"Here," laughed Lebedeff, at last, rising to his full height and looking pleasantly at the prince, "here, in the lining of my coat; look, you can feel it for yourself if you like!"

Sure enough there was something sticking out of the very front of the coat—something large; it certainly felt as though it might well be the purse fallen through a hole in the pocket into the lining.

"I took it out and had a look at it; it's all right. I've let it slip back into the lining now, as you see, and so I have been walking about ever since yesterday morning; it knocks against my legs like anything when I walk along."

"H'm! and you take no notice of it!"

"Quite so, I take no notice of it. Ha, ha! and think of this, prince, my pockets are always strong and whole, and yet here, in one night, is a huge hole; I know the phenomenon is unworthy of your notice; but such is the case. I examined the hole, and I declare it actually looks as though it had been made with a pen knife, an almost improbable contingency, isn't it, sir?"

"And—and—the general?"

"Ah, very angry all day, sir; all yesterday and all to-day; he shows decided bacchanalian predilictions at one time and at another is tearful and sensitive, but at any moment he is liable to paroxysms of such rage that I assure you, prince, I am quite alarmed; I am not a military man, you know. Yesterday we were sitting together at the 'pub,' and the lining of my coat was—quite accidently of course—sticking out right in front. The general squinted at it and flew into a rage. He never looks me quite in the face now, unless he is very drunk or maudlin; but yesterday he looked at me once or twice in such a way that a shiver went all down my back. I intend to find the purse to-morrow; but till then I am going to have another night of it with him."

"What's the good of tormenting him like this?" cried the prince.

"I don't torment him, prince, I don't, indeed!" cried Lebedeff, hotly; "I love him, my dear sir, I esteem him; and believe it or not, I love him all the better for this business, yes—and value him more."

Lebedeff said all this so seriously that the prince quite lost his temper with him.

"Nonsense! love him and torment him so! Why, by the

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very fact that he put the purse prominently before you, first under the chair and then in your lining, he shows that he does not wish to deceive you, but is anxious to beg your forgiveness in this artless way. Do you hear? he is asking your pardon. He confides in the delicacy of your feelings, and in your friendship for him. And you can allow yourself to humiliate so thoroughly honest a man!"

"Thoroughly honest, quite so, prince, thoroughly honest!" said Lebedeff, with flashing eyes, "and only you, prince, could have found so very appropriate an expression. I honour you for it, prince; very well, that's settled, I shall find the purse *now* and not to-morrow. Here, I find it and take it out before your eyes, then; and the money is all right; take it, prince, and keep it till to-morrow, will you? to-morrow or next day I'll take it back again. What do you think, prince! the night after its disappearance it was buried under a bush in the garden. So I believe—what do you think of that?"

"Well, take care you don't tell him to his face that you have found the purse; simply let him see that it is no longer in the lining of your coat, and form his own conclusions."

"Do you think so? had I not just better tell him I have found it and pretend I never guessed where it was?"

"No, I don't think so," said the prince, thoughtfully; "it's too late for that—that would be dangerous now. No, no! better say nothing about it; be nice with him, you know, but don't show him—oh, *you* know well enough—"

"I know, prince, of course I know, but I'm afraid I shall not carry it out; for to do so one needs a heart like your own. He is so very irritable just now, and so proud towards me; at one moment he will embrace me, and the next he flies out at me and despises and laughs at me. At all events I've taken the purse out and I'll stick the lining prominently forward. Well, *au revoir*, prince, I see I am keeping you and boring you too, interfering with your most interesting private reflections."

"Now, do be careful—"

"Oh, silence isn't the word"

But in spite of this conclusion to the episode, the prince remained as preoccupied as ever, if not more so. He awaited next morning's interview with the general most impatiently.

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IV.

THE time appointed was about eleven, but the prince was unexpectedly later than he intended.

Returning home he found the general waiting for him; and at the very first glance, he saw that the latter was displeased, perhaps because he had been kept waiting. The prince apologized, and quickly took a seat. He felt strangely timid before the general this morning, for some reason or other; the latter appeared to him to-day to be like some piece of china which he was afraid of breaking.

On scrutinizing his guest, the prince soon saw that the general was evidently quite a different man from what he had been the day before; he looked like one who had come to some momentous resolve. This calmness, however, was more exterior than inward. He was courteous, but with an expression of injured innocence in all he said.

"I've brought your book back," he began, indicating a book lying on the table; "much obliged to you for it."

"Ah, yes. Well, did you read it, general? it's curious, isn't it?" said the prince, delighted to be able to open up a conversation so soon, and upon an outside subject too.

"Curious enough, yes, and crude enough too, and of course dreadful nonsense; probably the man lies at every other page."

The general spoke with considerable confidence, and dragged his words out with a conceited drawl.

"Oh, but it's only the simple tale of an old soldier about the French entering Moscow. Some of his remarks were wonderfully good. Remarks of an eye-witness are always valuable, whoever he be, don't you think so?"

"Had I been the publisher I should not have printed the volume. As to the evidence of eye-witnesses, in these days people prefer impudent lies to the stories of men of worth, and long service. I know of some notes of the year '12, which—I have determined, prince, to leave this house, Mr. Lebedeff's house.'

The general looked significantly at his host.

"Of course you have your own lodging at Pavlofsk at—at your daughter's house," began the prince, quite at a loss what to say. He suddenly recollected that the general had come for advice on a most important matter, affecting his destiny.

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"At my wife's, in other words, at my own place, my daughter's house."

"I beg your pardon, I—"

"I leave Lebedeff's house, my dear prince, because I have quarrelled with this person. I broke with him last night, and am very sorry that I did not do so before. I expect respect, prince, even from those to whom I give my heart, so to speak. Prince, I have often given away my heart, and am nearly always deceived. This person was quite unworthy of the gift."

"There is much which might be improved in him," said the prince, moderately, "but some qualities which—though amid them one cannot but discern a cunning nature—reveal what is sometimes a diverting intellect."

The prince's tone was so sincere that the general could not possibly suspect him of any insincerity.

"Oh, that he possesses good enough traits in his character, I was the first to show, for I very nearly made this individual a present of my friendship. I am not dependent upon his hospitality, and upon his house; I have my own family. I do not attempt to justify my own weaknesses. I have drunk wine with this man, and perhaps I deplore the fact now, but I did not take up this man for the sake of drink alone (excuse the crudeness of the expression, prince); I did not make friends with him for drink alone. I was attracted by his good qualities; but when the fellow declares that he was a child in '12, and had his left leg cut off, and buried in the Vagarkoff cemetery, in Moscow, such a cock and bull story amounts to disrespect, my dear sir, to—to impudent exaggeration."

"Oh, he was very likely joking; he said it for fun, to get up a laugh."

"I quite understand you; you mean that an innocent lie for the sake of a good joke is very harmless, and does not offend the human heart. Some people lie, if you like to put it so, out of pure friendship, in order to amuse their fellows; but when a man makes use of extravagance in order to show his disrespect and to make it clear how the intimacy bores him, it is time to break off the said intimacy and to teach the offending party his place."

The general flushed up as he spoke.

"Oh, but Lebedeff cannot have been in Moscow in 1812, he is much too young; the thing is all nonsense."

"Very well, but even if we admit that he *was* alive in 1812, as if one can believe that a French chasseur pointed a cannon at him for a lark, and shot his left leg off? He says he picked

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his own leg up and took it away and buried it in the cemetery. He swore he had a stone put up over it with the inscription: 'Here lies the leg of Collegiate Secretary Lebedeff, and on the other side, 'Lie still, dear dust, till the morn of joy,' and that he has a service for it every year (which is simply sacrilege), and goes to Moscow once a year on purpose. He invites me to Moscow in order to prove his assertion, and show me his leg's tomb, and the very cannon that shot him; he says it's the eleventh from the gate, an old fashioned falcon taken from the French afterwards."

"And, meanwhile both his legs are still in full swing on his body," said the prince laughing; "I assure you, it is only an innocent joke, and you need not be angry about *that* anyhow."

"Excuse me—wait a minute—he says that leg we see is a new-fashioned sham one."

"Yes, they do say one can dance with those Chornosvetofsky ones."

"Quite so, quite so; but he swears that his wife never found out that one of his legs was wooden all the while they were married. When I showed him the ridiculousness of this assertion he said, 'Well, if you declare you were one of Napoleon's pages in 1812, then I shall just stick to the burial of my leg in the Moscow cemetery.'"

"Why, did you say—" began the prince, and paused in confusion.

The general gazed at his host disdainfully, almost jeeringly:

"Oh, go on," he said, "finish your sentence, by all means say how odd it appears to you that a man fallen to such a depth of humiliation as I, can ever have been the actual eye-witness of great events. Go on, *I* don't mind. Has *he* found time to tell you any scandal about me?"

"No, I've heard nothing of this from Lebedeff, if you mean Lebedeff."

"H'm; I thought differently. You see, we were talking over this period of history. I was criticising a current report of something which then happened, and having been myself an eye-witness of the occurrence—you are smiling, prince—you are looking at my face as if—"

"Oh, no! not at all—I—"

"I am rather young looking, I know; but I am actually older than I appear to be. I was ten or eleven in the year 1812."

"I assure you, general, I do not in the least doubt your statement. One of our living autobiographers states that when

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he was a small baby in Moscow in 1812 the French soldiers fed him with bread."

"Well, there you see!" said the general, condescendingly, "there is nothing whatever unusual about my tale; truth very often appears to be impossible. I was a page—it sounds strange, I daresay; had I been fifteen years old I should probably have been terribly frightened when the French arrived, as my mother was (who had been too slow about clearing out of Moscow); but as I was only just ten I was not in the least alarmed and rushed through the crowd to the very door of the palace when Napoleon alighted from his horse."

"Undoubtedly, at ten years old you would not have felt the sense of fear, as you say;" blurted out the prince, horribly uncomfortable in the sensation that he was just about to blush violently.

"Of course and it all happened so easily and naturally just as simply as it possibly could, and yet, just get a novelist to describe the episode and he'll be stuck down as an exaggerator at once."

"Oh," cried the prince, "I have often thought that; why, I know of a murder, for the sake of a watch; it's all in the papers now; but if some writer had invented it, all the critics would have jumped down his throat and said the thing was too improbable for anything. And yet you read it in the paper, and you can't help thinking that out of these strange disclosures is to be learned the full knowledge of Russian character in its entirety. You said that well, general, it is so true," concluded the prince warmly, delighted to have got through the horrible fiery blush which had covered his face.

"Yes, it's quite true, isn't it?" cried the general, his eyes sparkling with gratification. "A small boy, a child, would naturally realize no danger; he would shove his way through the crowds to see the shine and glitter and uniforms and especially the great man of whom everyone was speaking, for at that time all the world had been talking of no one but this man for some years past. The world was full of his name; I —so to speak—drew it in with my mother's milk.

"Napoleon, passing a couple of paces from me, caught my eye accidently. I was very neatly dressed, and being all alone, in that crowd, as you will easily imagine."

"Oh, of course; naturally the sight impressed him and proved to him that not *all* the aristocracy had left Moscow, that at least some Boyards and their children had remained behind."

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"Just so! just so! Well, he wanted to see a Boyard. When his eagle eye fell on me, mine probably flashed back in response. '*Voilà un garçon bien éveillé, qui est ton père?*' I immediately replied, almost panting with excitement, 'A general dead on the battle-fields of his country!' '*Le fils d'un boyard et d'un brave pardessus le marché. J'aime les boyards. M'aimes-tu petit?*'

"To this keen question I replied as keenly, 'The Russian heart can distinguish a great man even in the bitter enemy of his country,' at least, I don't remember the exact words, you know, but the idea was as I say. Napoleon was struck; he thought a minute and then said to his suite: 'I like that boy's pride; if all Russians think like this child, then—' he didn't finish, but went on and entered the palace. I instantly mixed with his suite, and followed him. I was already in high favour among the suite; I remember when I came into the first hall the emperor stopped before a portrait of the Empress Katherine and after a thoughtful glance remarked, 'That was a great woman,' and passed on.

"Well, in a couple of days I was known all over the palace and the Kremlin as 'le petit boyard.' I only went home to sleep. They were nearly out of their minds about me at home. A couple of days after this Napoleon's page, De Bazancour, died; he had not been able to stand the trials of the campaign. Napoleon remembered me; I was taken away without explanations; the dead page's uniform was tried on me, and when I was carried before the emperor, dressed in it, he nodded his head to me and I was told that I was appointed to the vacant post of page.

"Well, I was glad enough, for I had long felt the greatest sympathy for this man; and then the pretty uniform and all that—only a child, you know—and so on. It was a dark green dress coat with gold buttons—red facings, white trousers, and a white waistcoat—silk—silk stockings, shoes with buckles, and a lot of extras if I were riding out with his majesty or taking duty with the suite.

"Though the position of all of us at that time was not particularly brilliant, and the poverty was dreadful all round, yet the etiquette at court was strictly preserved, and the more strictly in proportion to the growth of the universal poverty."

"Quite so, quite so, of course!" murmured the poor prince, who didn't know where to look. "Your notes would be a most interesting collection."

The general was of course repeating what he had told

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Lebedeff the night before, and thus brought it out glibly enough, but here he looked suspiciously at the prince out of the corners of his eyes.

"My notes!" he began, with redoubled pride and dignity. "Write my notes? The idea has not taught me pride. And yet, if you please, my notes have long been written, but they shall not see the light until the dust returns to dust, then, I doubt not, they will be translated into all languages, not of course on account of their actual literary merit, but because of the great events of which I was the actual witness, though but a child at the time. As a child, however, I was able to penetrate to the secret depths of the great man's private room. At nights I have heard the groans and wailings of this 'giant in distress.' He could feel no shame in weeping before such a mere child as I was, though I understood even then that the reason for his suffering was the silence of the Emperor Alexander."

"Yes, of course, he had written letters to the latter with proposals of peace, had he not?" put in the prince.

"We did not know the details of his proposals, but he wrote letter after letter, all day and every day. He was dreadfully worried. Sometimes at night I would throw myself upon his breast with tears (Oh, how I loved that man!), 'Ask forgiveness, O do ask forgiveness of the Emperor Alexander!' I would cry. I should have said, of course, 'Do make peace with Alexander,' but as a child I expressed my idea in the naive way recorded. 'Oh, my child,' he would say (he loved to talk to me and seemed to forget my tender years), 'Oh, my child, I am ready to kiss Alexander's feet, but I hate and abominate the King of Prussia and the Austrian Emperor, and—and—but don't think of politics, my child.' He would pull up, remembering whom he was speaking to, but his eyes would sparkle for a long while after this. Well now, if I were to describe all this, and I have seen greater events than these, all these critical gentlemen of the press and political parties—Oh, no thanks! I'm their very humble servant, but no thanks!"

"Quite so—parties—you are very right," said the prince. "I was reading a book about Napoleon and the Waterloo campaign only the other day in which the author does not attempt to conceal his joy at Napoleon's discomfiture at every page; well now, I don't like that; it smells of 'party' you know. You are quite right. And were you much occupied with your service under Napoleon?"

The general was in ecstacies.

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The prince's last remark, made, as it evidently was, in all seriousness and simplicity, quite dissipated the last relics of his suspicion.

"I know, Sharass' book, you mean? Oh! I was so angry with his work; I wrote to him and said—I forget what, at this moment. You ask whether I was very busy under the Emperor? Oh no! I was called 'page' but hardly took my duty seriously. Besides, Napoleon very soon lost hope of conciliating the Russians, and he would have forgotten all about me had he not loved me—for personal reasons—I don't mind saying so now. My heart was greatly drawn to him, too. My duty was light—I merely had to be at the palace occasionally to escort the Emperor out riding, and that was about all. I rode very fairly well. He used to have a ride before dinner, and his suite on those occasions were generally Davoust, myself, and Roustan."

"Constant?" said the prince suddenly, for some reason or other.

"No; Constant was away then taking a letter to the Empress Josephine. Instead of him there were always a couple of orderlies—and that was all, excepting, of course, the generals and marshals whom Napoleon always took with him for the inspection of various localities and for the sake of consultation generally.

"I remember there was one—Davoust—nearly always with him—a big man with spectacles. They used to argue and quarrel sometimes. Once they were in the Emperor's study together—just those two and myself—I was unobserved—and they argued, and the Emperor seemed to be agreeing to something under protest. Suddenly his eye fell on me and an idea seemed to flash across him.

"'Child,' he said, abruptly. 'If I were to recognise the Russian orthodox religion and emancipate the serfs, do you think Russia would go with me?'

"'Never!' I cried, indignantly.

The Emperor was much struck.

"'In the flashing eyes of this patriotic child I read and accept the fiat of the Russian people. Enough, Davoust, it is mere phantasy on our part. Come, let's hear your other project.'"

"Yes, but that was a great idea," said the prince, clearly interested. "You ascribe it to Davoust, do you?"

"Well, at all events, they were consulting together at the time. Of course the idea was an Eagle thought, and must have originated with Napoleon; but the other project was good too—it was the 'Conseil du lion!' as Napoleon called it. This

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project consisted in a proposal to occupy the Kremlin with the whole army; to arm and fortify it scientifically, and kill as many horses as could be got and salt their flesh and spend the winter there; and in spring to cut their way out. Napoleon liked the idea—it attracted him. We rode round the Kremlin walls every day, and Napoleon used to give orders where they were to be patched, where built up, where pulled down and so on. All was decided at last. They were alone together—those two and myself.

"Napoleon was walking up and down in agitation; I could not take my eyes off his face—my heart beat loudly and painfully.

"'I'm off,' said Davoust. 'Where to?' asked Napoleon. 'To salt horses,' said Davoust. Napoleon shuddered—his fate was being decided.

"'Child,' he addressed me suddenly, 'what do you think of our plan?' Of course he only applied to me just *so*, you know. I turned to Davoust and addressed my reply to him; I said:

"'Escape, general! go home!—'

"The project was received; Davoust shrugged his shoulders and went out, whispering to himself. '*Bah, il devient superstitieux!*'

"Next morning the order went out to march."

"This is all most interesting," said the prince, very softly, "if it really was so—that is, I mean—" he hastened to correct himself.

"Oh, my dear prince," cried the general, who was now so intoxicated with his own narrative that he probably could not have pulled up at the most patent indiscretion. "You say, 'all this,' my dear sir, there was more—*much* more, I assure you. These are merely a few little political facts. I tell you I was the eye-witness of the nightly sorrow and groanings of the great man, and of *that* no one can speak but myself. Towards the end he wept no more, though he continued to emit an occasional groan; but his face grew blacker and more fiery day by day. Just as though Eternity were wrapping its gloomy mantle about him. Occasionally we passed whole hours of silence together at night; Roustan snoring in the next room—that fellow slept like a pig. 'But he's loyal to me and my dynasty,' said Napoleon of him.

"Sometimes it was very painful to me, and once he caught me with tears in my eyes; he looked at me kindly: 'You are sorry for me,' he said, 'you, my child, and perhaps one other child—my son, the King of Rome, may grieve for me; all the

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rest hate me; and my brothers are the first to betray me in misfortune.' I moaned and sobbed and thrust myself into his arms. He could not resist me—he burst into tears, and our tears mingled as we folded each other in a close embrace.

"'Write, oh, write a letter to the Empress Josephine!' I cried, sobbing. Napoleon shuddered, reflected, and said, 'You remind me of a third heart which loves me. Thank you, my friend;' and then and there he sat down and wrote that letter to Josephine, with which Constant was sent off next day."

"You did a good action," said the prince, "for in the midst of his angry feelings you insinuated a kind thought into his heart."

"Just so, prince, just so; how well you bring out that fact; because your own heart is good!" cried the ecstatic old gentleman, and strangely enough real tears glistened in his eyes. "Yes, prince, it was a wonderful spectacle. And, do you know, I all but went off to Paris, and should assuredly have shared his solitary exile with him; but, alas, our destinies were otherwise ordered. We parted, he to his island, where I am sure he thought of the weeping child who had embraced him so affectionately at parting in Moscow; and I was sent off to the cadet corps, where I found nothing but rudeness and vulgarity. Alas, my happy days were done.

"'I do not wish to deprive your mother of you, and, therefore, I will not ask you to go with me,' he said, the morning of his departure, 'but I should like to do something for you.' He was mounting his horse as he spoke.

"'Write something in my sister's album for me,' I said rather timidly, for he was in a state of great agitation and dejection at the moment. He turned and called for a pen, took the album: 'How old is your sister?' he asked, holding the pen in his hand. 'Three years old,' I said. 'Ah, *petite fille alors!*' and he jotted down in the album:

"'*Ne mentez jamais!*'

"'*Napoléon—votre ami sincère.*'

"Such advice, and at such a moment, you must allow, prince, was—"

"Yes, quite so; very remarkable."

"This page of the album, framed in gold, hung on the wall of my sister's drawing-room all her life, in the most conspicuous place, till the very day of her death; where it is now, I really don't know. My goodness, it's two o'clock! *How* I have delayed you, prince; it is really most unpardonable of me."

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The general rose.

"Oh, not in the least," said the prince, "on the contrary, I have been so much interested, I'm really very much obliged to you."

"Prince," said the general, pressing his hand once more, painfully, and looking at him with flashing eyes, and with an expression as though he had but just recollected himself, and was under the influence of a sudden thought which had come upon him with stunning force. "Prince, you are so kind, so simple-minded, that sometimes I really feel quite sorry for you. I gaze at you with a feeling of real affection—oh, heaven bless you! may your life blossom and fructify in love; mine is over, forgive me, forgive me!"

He left the room quickly, covering his face with his hands.

The prince could not doubt the sincerity of his agitation. He quite understood that the old man had left the room simply intoxicated with his own success. The general belonged to that class of liars, who, in spite of their transports of lying, invariably suspect that they are not believed. But on this occasion the old fellow was perfectly happy, for he had not the least suspicion that the prince doubted a single word he had said.

"Have I been acting rightly in allowing him to develop such vast resources of imagination?" the prince asked himself. But his answer was a fit of violent laughter which lasted ten whole minutes. He tried to reproach himself for the laughing fit, but eventually concluded that he needn't do so, since in spite of it he was truly sorry for the old man. The same evening the prince received a strange letter from the general, short but decided. The general informed him that they must part for ever; that "he was grateful, but that even from him (the prince) he could not accept signs of sympathy which were humiliating to the dignity of a man already miserable enough."

When the prince heard the old man had gone to Nina Alexandrovna, however, he felt almost easy on his account.

We have seen, however, that the general paid a visit to Lizabetha Prokofievna and did mischief there.

What all this mischief was we cannot explain in detail, suffice to say that he frightened Mrs. Epanchin, and irritated her by bitter hints as to his son Gania.

He had been turned out with ignominy, eventually, and this latter fact was the cause of his bad night and quarrelsome day, which ended in his sudden departure into the street in a condition approaching insanity, as recorded above.

Colia did not understand the position of affairs; he tried

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severity with his father (as they stood in the street after the latter had cursed the household), hoping to gain something that way.

"Well, where are we to go to now, general?" he asked. "To the prince's you will not; you have quarrelled with Lebedeff; you have no money; I never have any; and here we are in the middle of the road, in a jolly sort of plight."

"Better that than— I remember making a joke something like that at the mess in eighteen hundred and forty—forty—I forget. 'Where is my youth, where is my golden youth?' Who was it said that, Colia?"

"It was Gogol, in 'Dead Souls,' father," cried Colia, glancing at him in some alarm.

"'Dead souls,' yes, of course, dead; when I die, Colia, you must engrave on my tomb:

"'Here lies a Dead Soul,
Shame pursues me.'

"Who said that, Colia?"

"I don't know, father."

"There was no Eropegoff Eroshka Eropegoff!" he cried suddenly, stopping in the road in perplexity. "No Eropegoff, and my own son to say it. Eropegoff was in the place of a brother to me for eleven months once; I fought a duel for him; he was married afterwards, and then killed on the field of battle; the bullet struck the cross on my breast and went off straight into his temple; 'I'll never forget you,' he cried, and expired. I served my country well and honestly, Colia, but disgrace, disgrace has pursued me. You and Nina will come to my grave, Colia; poor Nina, I always used to call her Nina in the old days, and she loved the name so, Nina, Nina, oh, Nina! what have I ever done to deserve your good heart and your forgiveness and long suffering? Oh, Colia, your mother has an angelic spirit, an angelic spirit, Colia!"

"I know that, father, look here, dear old father, come back home, let's go back to mother. Look, she ran after us when we came out. What have you stopped here for, just as though you didn't take in what I said? Why are you crying, father? don't."

Poor Colia cried himself and kissed the old fellow's hands.

"You kiss my hands, *mine?*"

"Yes, yes, yours, yours. What is there to surprise anyone in that? Come, come, you mustn't go on like this, crying in

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the middle of the road, and you a general, too, a military man. Come, let's go back."

"God bless you, dear boy, for being respectful to a disgraced man. Yes, to a poor disgraced old fellow, your father. You shall have such a son yourself; *le roi de Rome;* oh, curses on this house!"

"Come, come, what does all this mean?" cried Colia, boiling over at last, "what is it? what has happened to you here? Why don't you wish to come back home? Why have you gone out of your mind, like this?"

"I'll explain it, I'll explain all to you; don't make a row, you shall hear, *le roi de Rome,* oh, it's sufficiently piteous, it's sad, melancholy.

"'Nurse, where is your tomb?'

"Who said that, Colia?"

"I don't know, I don't know who said it. Come home at once; come on. I'll punch Gania's head myself, if you like—only come in—oh, where *are* you off to again?"

The general was dragging him away towards the door of a house near.

"Bend down—bend down—your ear. I'll tell you all—disgrace—bend down, I'll tell you in your ear."

"What *are* you dreaming of?" said poor, frightened Colia, bending his ear towards the old man, all the same.

"*Le roi de Rome,*" whispered the general, trembling all over.

"What? what *do* you mean? What *roi de Rome?*"

"I—I," the general continued to whisper, leaning more and more heavily on his boy's shoulder; "I—wish—to tell you—all—Maria—Maria Petrovna—Su—Su—Su—"

Colia broke loose, seized his father by the shoulders, and stared straight into his eyes with frenzied gaze. The old man had grown livid—his lips were shaking, convulsions were passing over his features. Suddenly he leant over and began to droop slowly into Colia's arms.

"He's got a stroke!" cried Colia as loud as he could, realizing what was the matter at last.

V.

IN point of fact, Varia had rather exaggerated the accuracy of her news as to the prince's betrothal to Aglaya. Very

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likely, with the perspicacity of her sex, she gave out as an accomplished fact what was pretty sure to become a fact in a few days.

Perhaps she could not resist the satisfaction of pouring one last drop of poison into her brother Gania's cup, in spite of her love for him. At all events, she had been unable to obtain any absolute news out of her friends the Epanchin girls—the most she could get out of them being hints and guesses and riddles and so on.

Perhaps Aglaya's sisters had merely been pumping Varia for news while pretending to impart information; or perhaps, again, they had been unable to resist the feminine gratification of annoying a friend—childish though such an amusement might be. They must, after all, try to get a peep at her ideas occasionally, after such a long and uncommunicative intimacy.

On the other side, the prince, although he had told Lebedeff, as we know, that nothing had happened or could happen to him which he could impart—the prince may have been in error. Something strange seemed to have come over all, without anything definite having actually happened. Varia guessed that with her true feminine instinct.

How or why it happened that every one at the Epanchins' became imbued with one conviction—that something very important had happened to Aglaya, and that her fate was in process of settlement, it would be very difficult to explain. But no sooner had this idea taken root, than all at once declared that they had seen and observed it long ago; that they had remarked it at the time of the "poor knight" joke and even before, though they had been unwilling to believe in such a nonsensical state of things.

So said the sisters. Of course, Lizabetha Prokofievna chanced to have foreseen it all before the rest; her "heart had been sore" for a long while, she declared, and it was now so sore that she appeared to be quite overwhelmed with her miseries.

There was a question to be decided—most important, but most difficult; so much so, that Mrs. Epanchin did not even realize how to put it into words. "Would the prince do or not?" was all this good or bad? If good (which might be the case, of course), *why* good? If bad (which was hardly doubtful), *wherein*, especially, bad? Even the general, the paterfamilias, though astonished at first, suddenly declared that, "upon his honour, he really believed he had thought of it, after all. At first, it seemed a new idea, and then, somehow, it looked as

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familiar as possible all of a sudden. His wife frowned him down there. This was in the morning; but in the bedroom council he had given tongue again.

"Well, really, you know"—silence—"of course, you know all this is very strange, if true, which I cannot deny; but"—silence—"but, on the other hand, if one looks things in the face, you know—upon my honour, the prince is a rare good fellow—and—and—and—well, his name, you know—*your* family name—all this looks well, and perpetuates the name and title and all that—which at this moment is not standing so high as it might—from one point of view—don't you know?—the world, the world *is* the world, of course—and people *will* talk—and—and—the prince has property, you know—if it is not very large—and then he—he—"

Silence, and continued silence, and failure.

Hearing these words from her husband, Lizabetha Prokofievna was driven beside herself.

According to her opinion, the whole past had been one huge fantastical, absurd, unpardonable, foolish mistake. "Firs of all, this prince is an idiot, and, secondly, he is a fool—knows nothing of the world, and has no place in it. Whom can he be shown to? Where can you take him to? What will old Bielokonski say? We never thought of such a husband as *that* for our Aglaya!"

Of course, the latter argument was the chief one of all. The maternal heart trembled with indignation to think of such an absurdity, although in that heart there rose a better voice, which said: "And *why* is not the prince such a husband as you would have desired for Aglaya?"

It was just this very little voice which annoyed Lizabetha Prokofievna more than anything else.

For some reason or other, the sisters liked the idea of the prince for Aglaya. They did not even consider it very strange; in a word, they might be expected at any moment to range themselves strongly on her side. But both of them decided to say nothing either way.

Alexandra, however, found it difficult to keep absolute silence on the subject.

Long since holding, as she did, the post of "confidential adviser to mamma," she was now perpetually called in for council, and asked her opinion, and especially her assistance, in order to recollect "how on earth all this happened? Why did no one see it? Why did no one say anything about it? What did all that wretched 'poor knight' joke mean?" Why was

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she, Lizabetha Prokofievna, driven to think, and foresee, and worry for everybody else besides herself, while they sucked their thumbs, and counted the crows in the garden, and did nothing? and so on. At first, Alexandra had been very careful, and had merely replied that perhaps her father's remark was not so far out: that, in the eyes of the world, probably the choice of the prince as a husband for one of the Epanchin girls would be considered a very wise one. Warming up, however, she would add that the prince was by no means a fool, and never had been; and that as to "place in the world"—goodness knows what the position of a respectable person in Russia would imply in a few years—whether it would consist in length of service, and so on, or the old system, or what.

To all this her mother would reply that Alexandra was a free-thinker, and that all this was due to that "cursed woman's rights' question."

Half an hour after this conversation, they went to town together, and thence to the Kámmenny Ostrof,* to fetch Princess Bielokonski, who had just arrived from Moscow on a short visit.

The princess was Aglaya's godmother.

"Old Bielokonski" listened to all the fevered and despairful lamentations of Lizabetha Prokofievna without the least emotion; the tears of this sorrowful mother did not evoke answering sighs—in fact, she laughed at her.

She was a dreadful old despot, this princess; she could not allow equality in anything, not even in friendship of the oldest standing and she insisted on treating Mrs. Epanchin as her protegée, as she had been thirty-five years ago; and she could never put up with the independence and energy of Lizabetha's nature.

She observed that, as usual, the whole family had gone much too far ahead, and had converted a fly into an elephant; that, so far as she had heard their story, she was persuaded that nothing of any seriousness had occurred; that it would surely be better to wait until something *did* happen; that the prince, in her opinion, was a very decent young fellow, though perhaps a little strange, through illness, and not quite as weighty in the world as one could wish. The worst feature was, she said, Nastasia Philipovna.

Lizabetha Prokofievna well understood that the old lady was angry at the failure of Evgenie Pavlovitch—her own recommendation.

* "Stone Island," a suburb and park of St. Petersburg.

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Lizabetha returned home to Pavlofsk in a worse humour than when she left, and of course everybody in the house suffered. She pitched into everyone, because, as she declared, they had gone mad. Why were things always mismanaged in her house? Why had everybody been in such a frantic hurry in this matter—so far as *she* could see, nothing whatever had happened. Surely they had better wait and see what *was* to happen, if anything. They needn't surely make an elephant of a wretched little fly, &c., &c.

And so the conclusion of the matter was that it would be far better to take it quietly, and wait coolly to see what would turn up.

But, alas! peace did not reign for more than ten minutes.

The first blow dealt to its power was in certain news communicated to Lizabetha Prokofievna as to events which had happened during her trip to see the princess. (This trip had taken place on the day after that on the evening of which the prince had turned up at the Epanchins at nearly one o'clock at night, thinking it was nine.)

The sisters replied candidly and fully enough to their mother's impatient questions on her return. They said, in the first place, that nothing particular had happened since her departure; that the prince had been, and that Aglaya had kept him waiting a long while before she appeared—half an hour, at least; that she had then come in, and immediately asked the prince to have a game of chess; that the prince did not know the game, and Aglaya had beaten him easily; that she had been in a wonderfully merry mood, and had laughed at the prince, and chaffed him so unmercifully, that one was quite sorry for him when one looked at his wretched expression.

She had then asked him to play cards—the game called "little fools." At this game the tables were turned completely, for the prince had shown himself little short of a professor at it. Aglaya had cheated and changed cards, and stolen others in the most barefaced way, but, in spite of everything she could do, the prince had beaten her hopelessly five times running, and she had been left "little fool" each time.

Aglaya then lost her temper, and began to say such awful things to the prince that he laughed no more, but grew dreadfully pale, especially when she said that she should not remain in the house with him, and that he ought to be ashamed of coming to their house at all, especially at night, "*after all that had happened.*"

So saying, she had left the room, banging the door after her.

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The prince went away, looking as though he were just off to the funeral of a near friend, in spite of all their attempts at consolation.

Suddenly, a quarter of an hour after the prince's departure, Aglaya had rushed out of the room in such a hurry that she had not even wiped her eyes, which were full of tears. She came back because Colia had brought a hedgehog. Everybody came in to see the hedgehog. Aglaya persuaded Colia to let her have the animal, and she had immediately packed it into a basket, and begged Colia to take it to the prince from her, and to say it was a "pledge of her profound esteem." Colia had accepted the commission with delight, and went away at full speed, carrying the hedgehog in a basket. After this Aglaya had been in a grand humour all day.

All this filled poor Lizabetha's mind with chaotic confusion. What on earth did it all mean? The most disturbing feature was the hedgehog. What was the symbolic signification of a hedgehog? What did they understand by it? What lover's sign was it? Was it a sort of telegram?

Poor General Epanchin "put his foot in it" by answering the above questions in his own way. He said: "there's no telegraphing in it at all;—as for the hedgehog—it was just a hedgehog—which means nothing—unless, indeed, it was a pledge of friendship,—the sign of forgetting of offences and so on;—at all events it was all a joke, and, of course, a most pardonable innocent one."

We may as well remark, by way of a little digression, that the general had guessed perfectly accurately.

The prince, returning home from the interview with Aglaya, had sat gloomy and depressed for half-an-hour; he was almost in despair when Colia arrived with the hedgehog.

Then the sky cleared in a moment;—the prince seemed to arise from the dead; he asked Colia all about it,—made him repeat the story over and over again, and laughed and shook hands with the boy every moment.

It seemed clear to the prince that Aglaya forgave him, and that he might go there again this very evening;—and in his eyes that was not only the main thing, but everything in the world.

"What children we are still, Colia!" he cried at last, enthusiastically,—"and how delightful it is that we *can* be children still!"

"Simply—my dear prince,—simply she is in love with you,—that's the whole of the secret!" replied Colia, insinuatingly, and with authority.

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The prince blushed, but this time he said nothing. Colia only burst out laughing and clapped his hands. A minute or so later the prince burst out laughing too, and from this moment until the evening he looked at his watch every other minute to see how much time he had to wait before evening came.

But the situation was becoming rapidly critical.

Mrs. Epanchin could bear her suspense no longer, and in spite of the opposition of husband and daughters, she sent for Aglaya,—determined to get a straightforward answer out of her once for all.

"Otherwise," she observed pathetically, "I shall die before evening."

It was only now that everyone realized to what a ridiculous dead-lock the whole matter had been brought. Excepting surprise (feigned, of course), irritated laughter, and jeering—both at the prince and at every one who asked her any questions,—nothing could be got out of Aglaya.

Lizabetha Prokofievna went to bed and only rose again in time for tea—about when the prince might be expected.

She awaited the prince in trembling agitation; and when he at last arrived she very nearly went off in a fit of hysterics.

The prince himself came in very timidly,—he seemed to come in *groping*, and looked in each person's eyes with a sort of questioning look,—for Aglaya was absent again, which fact alarmed him at once.

This evening there were no strangers present—no one but the immediate members of the family.

Prince S. was still in town occupied with the affairs of Evgenie Pavlovitch's uncle.

"I do wish at least *he* would come and say something!" complained poor Lizabetha Prokofievna.

The general sat still with a most pre-occupied air.

The sisters were looking very serious and did not speak a word.

Lizabetha Prokofienva did not know how to commence the conversation.

A length she plunged into an energetically hostile criticism of railways, and glared at the prince defiantly.

Alas! Aglaya still did not come—and the prince was quite lost. He had the greatest difficulty in expressing his opinion that railways were most useful institutions,—and in the middle of his speech Adelaida laughed;—this threw the prince into a state of confusion worse confounded.

At this very moment in marched Aglaya as calm and collected

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and stately as could be. She gave the prince a ceremonious bow and solemnly took up a prominent position near the big round table. She looked at the prince questioningly.

All present realized that the moment had arrived for the settlement of all perplexities.

"Did you get my hedgehog?" she inquired, firmly and almost angrily.

"Yes, I got it," said the prince, blushing and trembling.

"Tell us now, at once—what you make of the present? I must have you answer this question for mother's sake; she wants pacifying, and so do all the rest of the family!"

"Look here, Aglaya—" began the general.

"This—this is going beyond all limits!" said Lizabetha Prokofievna, terribly frightened.

"It is not in the least beyond any limits at all, mamma!" said her daughter, firing. "I sent the prince a hedgehog this morning and I wish to hear his opinion of it. Go on, prince."

"What—what sort of opinion, Aglaya Ivanovna?"

"About the hedgehog."

"That is—I suppose you wish to know how I received the hedgehog, Aglaya Ivanovna,—or, I should say, how I regarded your sending him to me?—in that case, I may tell you—in a word—that I—"

He paused and panted.

"Come—you haven't told us much!" said Aglaya, after a silence of some five seconds. "Very well, I am ready to drop the hedgehog if you like; but I am very anxious to be able to clear off the accumulation of perplexities. Allow me to ask you, prince,—I wish to hear from you yourself, personally: are you courting me or not?"

"Gracious Heavens!" exclaimed Lizabetha Prokofievna.

The prince shuddered and trembled all over. The general stiffened in his chair; the sisters frowned.

"Don't deceive me now, prince—tell us the truth. All these people pursue me with astounding questions—thanks to yourself. Is there any ground for all these questions, or not? Come!"

"I have not courted you as yet, Aglaya Ivanovna," said the prince, becoming suddenly animated; "but you know yourself how much I love you and trust you, already."

"No—I asked you this—answer this! Do you intend to ask me for my hand, or not?"

"Yes—I do ask it!" said the prince, trembling with excitement.

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There was a general movement and shifting all over the room.

"No—no—my dear girl," began the general, "you cannot proceed like this, Aglaya, if that's how the matter stands, it's impossible, positively, prince, forgive me, my dear fellow, but —Lizabetha Prokofievna!"—he appealed to his spouse for help,—"you must really—"

"Not I—not I! I retire from all responsibility," said Lizabetha Prokofievna with a wave of the arm.

"Allow me to speak please, mamma," said Aglaya; "I think I ought to have something to say in the matter. An important moment of my destiny is about to be decided" (this is how Aglaya expressed herself) "and I wish to find out how the matter stands for my own sake, though I am glad you are all here. Allow me to ask you, prince, since you cherish those intentions, how you consider that you will provide for my happiness?"

"I—I don't quite know how to answer your question, Aglaya Ivanovna. What is there to say to such a question? and—and must I answer?"

"I think you are rather overwhelmed and out of breath; have a little rest, and then come forward with renewed vigour. Take a glass of water, or—but they'll give you some tea directly."

"I love you, Aglaya Ivanovna,—I love you very much; I love only you—and—please don't chaff about it, for I do love you very much."

"Come—this matter is important anyhow! We are not children—we must look into it thoroughly. Now then kindly explain—what does your property consist of?"

"No—Aglaya—come, enough of this, you mustn't behave like this," said her father, greatly alarmed.

"It's disgraceful," said Lizabetha Prokofievna in a loud whisper.

"She's mad—quite!" said Alexandra.

"Property—money—do you mean?" asked the prince in some surprise.

"Just so."

"I have now—let's see—I have a hundred and thirty-five thousand roubles," said the prince, blushing violently.

"Is that all, really?" said Aglaya, candidly, without the slightest show of confusion. "However it's not a bad little sum, especially if managed with economy. Do you intend to serve?"

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"I—I intended to try for a certificate as tutor."

"Very good—capital—that would increase our income nicely. Have you any intention of being a *valet de chambre*?"

"A valet? I had not thought of it yet, but—"

But here the two sisters could restrain themselves no longer, and both of them burst out laughing.

Adelaida had long since detected in Aglaya's well controlled features, the gathering signs of an approaching burst of laughter.

Aglaya looked surlily at her laughing sisters, but could not keep in her own laugh another second, and the next minute she too had burst into an irrepressible, and almost hysterical fit of mirth. At length she jumped off her chair, and ran out of the room.

"I knew it was all to end in nonsense!" cried Adelaida. "I felt it ever since—since the hedgehog."

"No, no! I cannot allow this,—this is a little too much," cried Lizabetha Prokofievna; and she rose from her seat and followed Aglaya out of the room as quickly as she could.

The two sisters hurriedly ran away after her.

The prince and the paterfamilias were the only two persons left in the room.

"It's—it's really—now could you have imagined anything of that sort, Lef Nicolaievitch?" cried the general snappishly; he was evidently so agitated that he hardly knew what he wished to say. "Seriously now, seriously I mean."

"I only see that Aglaya is laughing at me," said the poor prince, sadly.

"Wait a bit, my boy, I'll just go—you stay here you know; but do just explain, if you can, Lef Nicolaievitch, how in the world has all this come about? and what does it all mean? You must understand, my dear fellow, I am a father, you see, and I ought to be allowed to understand the matter—do explain, for goodness sake!"

"I love Aglaya Ivanovna—she knows it,—and I think she must have long known it."

The general shrugged his shoulders.

"Strange—it's strange," he said, "and you love her very much?"

"Yes, very much."

"Well—it's all most strange to me. That is—my dear fellow, it is such a surprise—such a blow—that, you see, it is not your financial position (though I should not object if you were a bit richer)—I am thinking of my daughter's happiness of course, and the thing is—*are* you able to bring her the happiness she

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deserves? and then—is all this a joke on her part, or is she in earnest? I don't mean on your side, mind, on hers."

At this moment Alexandra's voice was heard outside the door, calling out "papa!"

"Wait a bit for me here, my boy—will you? just wait and think it all over and I'll come back directly," he said hurriedly, and made off with what looked like the rapidity of alarm in response to Alexandra's call.

He found the mother and daughter locked in one another's arms and bathing each other with their tears.

These were the tears of joy and peace and kindness. Aglaya was kissing her mother's lips and cheeks and hands, and both were hugging each other in the most ardent way.

"There, look at her now—Ivan Fedorovitch! here she is—all of her! this is our *real* Aglaya at last!" said Elizabeth Prokofievna.

Aglaya raised her happy tearful face from her mother's breast, glanced at her father and burst out laughing; she sprang at him and hugged him too, and kissed him over and over again. She then rushed back to her mother and quite hid her face in the maternal bosom and there indulged in a good fit of crying. Her mother covered the girl with a corner of her shawl.

"Oh you cruel little girl! how will you treat us all next, I wonder?" she said, but she spoke with the ring of true joy in her voice; and as though she breathed at last without the oppression which she had felt so long upon her heart.

"Cruel?" sobbed Aglaya. "Yes, I *am* cruel, and worthless, and spoiled—tell father so,—oh, here he is—I forgot—father, listen," she laughed through her tears.

"My darling, my dear little idol girl," cried the radiant old general kissing, and fondling her hands (Aglaya did not draw them away), "so you love this young man, do you?"

"No, no, no, can't *bear* him, I can't *bear* your young man," cried Aglaya, raising her head, "and if you dare say that *once* more, papa—I'm serious, you know, I'm,—do you hear me—I'm serious!"

She certainly did seem to be serious enough; she had flushed up all over and her eyes were blazing with fire.

The general felt troubled and remained silent and frightened, while Lizabetha Prokofievna telegraphed to him from behind Aglaya to ask no questions.

"If that's the case, darling—then, of course, you shall do exactly as you like; he is waiting alone downstairs, hadn't I

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better hint to him gently that he can go?" The general telegraphed to Lizabetha Prokofievna in his turn.

"No, no, you needn't do anything of the sort; you mustn't hint gently at all, I'll go down myself directly; I wish to apologize to this young man, because I have offended him."

"Yes, *seriously* offended him," said the general gravely.

"Well, you'd better stay here, all of you for a little, and I'll go down to him alone to begin with; I'll just go in and then you can follow me almost at once, that's the best way."

She had almost reached the door when she turned round again.

"I shall laugh—I know I shall; I shall die of laughing," she said, lugubriously.

However, she turned and ran down to the prince as fast as her limbs could carry her.

"Well, what does it all mean? what do you make of it?" asked the general of his spouse, hurriedly.

"I hardly dare say," said Lizabetha, as hurriedly, "but I think it's as plain as anything can be."

"I think so too, as clear as day; she loves him."

"Loves him? she is head over ears in love, that's what she is," snapped Alexandra Ivanovna.

"Well, God bless her, God bless her, if such is her destiny," said Lizabetha, crossing herself devoutly.

"H'm! destiny it is," said the general, "and there's no getting out of destiny."

With these words they all moved off towards the drawing-room, where another surprise awaited them. Aglaya had not only *not* laughed, as she had feared, but came up to the prince rather timdily than otherwise and said to him:

"Forgive a silly, bad, spoilt girl" (she took his hand here), "and be quite assured that we all of us esteem you beyond all words. And if I dared to turn your beautiful, admirable simplicity to ridicule, forgive me as you would a little child its mischief; forgive me all my absurdity of just now, which, of course, meant nothing whatever and can have no sort of consequences." Aglaya spoke these last few words with great emphasis.

Her father, mother, and sisters came into the room and were much struck with the last words, which they just caught as they entered: absurdity which of course meant nothing, etc., and still more so with the emphasis with which Aglaya had brought the words out.

They all exchanged glances questioningly, but the prince

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did not seem to have understood the meaning of Aglaya's words; he was in the highest heaven of delight.

"Why do you speak so?" he murmured, "why do you ask my forgiveness?"

He wished to add that he was unworthy of being asked for forgiveness by her, but paused. Perhaps he *did* understand Aglaya's sentence about "absurdity which meant nothing," who knows, and like the strange fellow that he was, rejoiced in the words.

Undoubtedly the one fact that he might now come and see Aglaya as much as he pleased again was quite enough to make him perfectly happy; that he might come and speak to her, and see her, and sit by her, and walk with her—who knows, I say, but that all this was quite enough to satisfy him for the whole of his life, and that he would desire no more to the end of time.

(Lizabetha Prokefievna felt that this might be the case and she didn't like the thought; though very probably she neither knew herself that she feared it, nor could have put the idea into words if she *had* known it.)

It would be difficult to describe the animation and high spirits which distinguished the prince on this particular evening.

He was so jolly that "it made one feel jolly to look at him," as Aglaya's sisters expressed it afterwards. He talked, and told stories just as he had done once before, and never since, namely on the very first morning of his acquaintance with the Epanchins', six months ago. Since his return to Petersburg from Moscow, he had been remarkably silent, and had told Prince S. on one occasion, before everyone, that he did not think himself justified in distorting any thought by ventilating it in his unworthy words.

But this evening he did nearly all the talking by himself, and told stories by the dozen, while he answered all questions put to him clearly, joyfully, and with any amount of detail required.

There was nothing, however, of "lover's tattle" in his talk. His ideas were all of the most serious kind; some were even mystical.

The prince aired some of his own views on various matters, some of his most private opinions and observations, many of which would have seemed rather funny, so his hearers agreed afterwards, but that he spoke so well that there was no room for any sort of joke.

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The general liked serious subjects of conversation; but both he and Lizabetha Prokofievna felt that they were having a little too much of a good thing to-night, and as the evening advanced, they both grew more or less melancholy; but towards night, the prince fell to telling funny stories, and was always the first to burst out laughing himself, which he invariably did so joyously and simply, that the rest laughed just as much to see him as at the fun of his stories.

As for Aglaya, she hardly said a word all the evening; but she listened with all her ears to Lef Nicolaievitch's talk, and never once took her eyes off him the whole while.

"She looked at him, and stared and stared, and hung on every word he said, and caught them up, and grabbed them as they came out of his mouth," said Lizabetha, afterwards, to her lord, "and yet, tell her that she loves him, and, my word!"

"What's to be done? it's fate," said the general, shrugging his shoulders, and, for a long while after, he continued to repeat:

"It's fate, it's fate!"

We may add that to a business man like General Epanchin the present position of affairs was most unsatisfactory; he hated the uncertainty and undecided condition in which they had been, perforce, left. However, he decided to say no more about it, and merely to look on, and take his time and tune from Lizabetha Prokofievna.

The happy state in which the family had spent the evening, as just recorded, was not of very long duration.

Next day Aglaya quarrelled with the prince again, and so she continued to behave for the whole of the next few days. For whole hours at a time she ridiculed and chaffed the wretched prince, and made a regular fool of him.

It's true they used to sit in the little summer-house together for an hour or two at a time, very often, but it was observed that on these occasions the prince would read the paper or some book, aloud to Aglaya.

"Do you know," Aglaya said to him once, interrupting the reading, "I've remarked that you are dreadfully badly educated; you never know anything thoroughly, if one asks you, neither anyone's name, nor any dates one wants to know, or anything about treaties and so on; it's a great pity that, you know!"

"I told you I had not had much of an education," replied the prince.

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"How am I to respect you, if that's the case? Read on now; —no—don't! stop reading!"

And once more, that same evening, Aglaya set them all a riddle to guess.

Prince S. had returned, and Aglaya was particularly amiable to him, and asked a great deal after Evgenie Pavlovitch. (Lef Nicolaievitch had not come in as yet.)

Suddenly Prince S. hinted something about "a new and approaching change in the family." He was led to make this remark by a communication made to him by Lizabetha Prokofievna, that Adelaida's marriage must be postponed a little longer, in order that two weddings might come off together.

It is impossible to describe Aglaya's irritation. She flushed up, and said a few indignant words about "all these silly insinuations." She added that "she had no intentions as yet of entering into competition with other people's lovers, beggar women especially."

These words painfully impressed the whole party; but especially her parents. Lizabetha Prokofievna summoned a secret council of two, and insisted upon the general's claiming from the prince a full explanation of his relations with Nastasia Philipovna.

The general argued that it was only a foolish sally of Aglaya's; and that, had not Prince S. unfortunately made that remark about marriage, which had confused the child and made her blush, she never would have said what she did; and that he was sure Aglaya knew well that anything she might have heard of the prince and Nastasia Philipovna could be nothing but the fabrication of malicious tongues, and that the woman was really and truly engaged to marry Rogojin; he insisted that the prince had nothing whatever to do with Nastasia Philipovna, so far as any special relations were concerned; and, if the truth were to be told about it, he added, he never *had* had. Meanwhile nothing put the prince out, and he continued to walk about in the seventh heaven of bliss. Of course he could not fail to observe some impatience and temper in Aglaya's looks, now and then; but he believed more in her real hidden self, and Aglaya's frowns never lasted long; they disappeared of themselves.

Once assured of Aglaya's good feeling for him, he could never be in doubt of it again.

Perhaps he was *too* easy in his mind; so thought Hippolyte, at all events, who met him in the park now and then.

"Didn't I tell you the truth now, when I said you were in

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love?" he said, coming up to the prince of his own accord one day and stopping him.

The prince gave him his hand and congratulated him upon "looking so well."

Hippolyte himself seemed to be much encouraged about his own state of health; this is very often the case with consumptive sufferers.

He had approached the prince with the intention of talking about his (the prince's) happy expression of face and manner, but very soon forgot his intention and began to talk about himself. He began complaining and scolding all and everything, disconnectedly and endlessly, as was his wont.

"You wouldn't believe," he concluded, "how irritating they all are there; they are such wretchedly *small*, vain, egotistical, *common-place* people! Would you believe it, they invited me there under the express condition that I should die quickly, and they are all as wild as possible with me for not having died yet, and for being, on the contrary, a good deal better! Isn't it a comedy? I don't mind betting that you don't believe me!"

The prince said nothing.

"I sometimes think of coming over to you again," said Hippolyte carelessly; "so you *don't* think them capable of receiving a man on the understanding that he is to look sharp and die?"

"I certainly thought they invited you with quite other views."

"Ho, ho! you are not nearly so simple as they try to make you out! This is not the time for it, or I would tell you a thing or two about that beauty Gania and his little hopes. You are being undermined, pitilessly undermined, and—and it is really melancholy to see you so calm under it all. But alas! it's your nature—you can't help it!"

"My word! what a thing to be melancholy about! Why, do you think I should be any happier if I were to feel disturbed about the excavations you tell me of?"

"It is better to be unhappy and *know the worst*, than to be happy in a fool's paradise! I suppose you don't believe that you have a rival in that quarter?"

"Your insinuations as to rivalry are rather cynical, Hippolyte. I'm sorry to say I have no right to answer you! As for Gania, I put it to you, *can* any man lead a composed and calm life after passing through what he has had to suffer? I think that is the best way to look at it. He will change yet, he has lots of time before him, and life is rich; besides—besides," the prince hesitated, "as to being undermined, I don't know what

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in the world you are driving at, Hippolyte. I think we had better drop the subject!"

"Very well, we'll drop it for a while. You can't look at anything but in your exalted generous way. You must put out your finger and touch a thing before you'll believe it, eh? Ha! ha! ha! I wonder whether you despise me dreadfully, prince, eh? what do you think?"

"Why? because you have suffered more than we have?"

"No; because I am unworthy of my sufferings, if you like!"

"Whoever *can* suffer is worthy to suffer, I should think. Aglaya Ivanovna wished to see you, after she had read your confession, but—"

"She postponed the pleasure—I see—I quite understand!" said Hippolyte hurriedly, as though he wished to banish the subject. "I hear—they tell me—that you read her all that nonsense aloud?—stupid bosh it was—written in delirium, and —well, it's done, now. And I can't understand how anyone can be so— I won't say *cruel*, because the word would be humiliating to myself, but we'll say childishly vain and revengeful as to *reproach* me with this confession, and use it as a weapon against me. Don't be afraid, I'm not referring to yourself; I am—"

"Oh, but I'm sorry you repudiate the confession, Hippolyte —it is sincere; and, do you know, the very funniest parts of it—and these are many" (here Hippolyte frowned savagely, "are, as it were, purchased by suffering—for it must have cost you something to admit what you there say—great torture, perhaps, for all I know. Your motive must have been a very noble one all through. Whatsoever may have appeared to the contrary, I give you my word, I see this fact plainer every day of my life. I do not judge you; I merely say this to have it off my mind, and I am only sorry that I did not say it all *then*—"

Hippolyte flushed up.

He had thought at first that the prince was "humbugging" him; but on looking at the latter's face he saw that he was absolutely serious, and had no thought of anything but the most austere sincerity. Hippolyte's whole face beamed with gratification.

"And yet I must die," he said, and almost added: "fancy that! a man like me!

"And imagine how that Gania fellow annoys me. He has developed the idea—or pretends to believe—that in all probability three or four others who heard my confession will die

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before I do. There's an idea for you—and all this by way of *consoling* me. Ha! ha! ha! In the first place they haven't died yet; and in the second, if they *did* die—all of them—what would be the satisfaction to me in that? He judges me by himself. But he goes further, he actually pitches into me because, as he declares, 'any decent fellow' would die quietly in such circumstances as mine, and that 'all this' is mere egotism on my part. My goodness! he doesn't see what a refinement of egotism it is on his own part. Have you ever read of the death of one Stepan Gleboff, in the eighteenth century? I read of it yesterday by accident."

"Who was he?"

"He was impaled on a stake in the time of Peter."

"I know, I know; he lay there fifteen hours in the hard frost, and died with the most extraordinary fortitude—I know—what of him?"

"Only that God gives that sort of dying to some, and not to others. Perhaps you think, though, that I could not die like Gleboff?"

"Not at all!" said the prince, blushing. "I was only going to say that you—not that you could not act like a Gleboff—but that you would have been more like—"

"I guess what you mean—I should have been an Osterman—not a Gleboff—eh? is that what you meant?"

"What Osterman?" asked the prince in some surprise.

"Why, Osterman—the diplomatist. Petroffsky Osterman," muttered Hippolyte, confused. There was a moment's pause of mutual confusion.

"Oh, no, no!" said the prince at last, "that was not what I was going to say—oh no! I don't think you would ever have been like Osterman."

Hippolyte frowned gloomily.

"I'll tell you why I draw the conclusion," explained the prince, evidently desirous of clearing the matter a little for Hippolyte's benefit, "because think as I choose (and I often do think over those men and these times), I cannot for the life of me imagine the men to be like ourselves; it really appears to me that they must have belonged to some other nation—some other race altogether than ourselves of to-day. At that time people seemed to stick so to one idea; now, they are more nervous, more sensitive, more enlightened—people of two or three ideas at once—as it were; the man of-day is a broader man, so to speak—and I declare I believe that is what prevents him from being so self-contained, independent a being

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as his brother of those earlier days. Of course my remark was only made under this impression, and not in the least—"

"I quite understand. You are trying to comfort me for the naiveness with which you disagreed with me—eh? Ha! ha! ha! You are a regular child, prince. However, I cannot help seeing that you always treat me like—like a fragile china cup—never mind, never mind, I'm not a bit angry. At all events we have had a very funny talk. Do you know, all things considered, I should like to be something better than Osterman. I wouldn't take the trouble to rise from the dead to be an Osterman. However, I see I must make arrangements to die soon, or I myself—Well—leave me now, *au revoir;* look here—before you go; just tell me your own private opinion: how do you think I ought to die, now? I mean—so that the thing should *look* best, don't you know, eh?—tell me."

"You should leave us and go, and forgive us our happiness here!" said the prince in a low voice.

"Ha! ha! ha! I thought so. I thought I should hear something just like that. Well, you are—you really *are*—oh dear me; eloquence, eloquence—*au revoir—au revoir!*"

VI.

AS to the evening party at the Epanchins' at which Princess Bielokonski was to be present, Varia had reported with accuracy: guests were expected that very day.

Princess Bielokonski was staying in Petersburg but a very short while; and as her "protection" was a most important factor in society, and as Aglaya's parents believed that she would look kindly upon the prince, they counted upon society taking up Aglaya's husband straight out of the hands, so to speak, of this all-mighty old lady. Under such protection, they felt, anything strange about the young fellow would lose much of it strangeness.

The fact was that the parents themselves were quite unable to decide *by* themselves whether there *were* any strangeness or no. At all events, the prince must be brought out sooner or later into that "world," of which, up to now, he knew absolutely nothing.

The project of the evening party was, therefore, simple in the extreme; the prince was to be "shown off." Only the great friends of the household were expected; besides old

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Bielokonski, only one other lady was to be present; while as to young people, no one excepting Evgenie Pavlovitch, who was to escort Princess Bielokonski down, was expected. The prince heard that the latter august lady was to come about three days before the evening in question.

He could not help observing the excited and agitated condition of all members of the family, and from certain hints dropped in coversation he gathered that they were all anxious as to the impression he should make upon the princess. But the Epanchins, one and all, believed that the prince, in his simplicity of mind, was quite incapable of realizing that they could be feeling any anxiety on such a matter, and for this reason they all looked at him with dread and terror in their souls.

In point of fact, he did attach marvellously little importance to the approaching event; he was occupied with altogether different thoughts and ideas.

Aglaya was growing hourly more capricious and gloomy, and this fact distressed him.

When they told him that Evgenie Pavlovitch was expected, he evinced great delight, and said that he had long wished to see the latter.

Somehow these words did not please anyone.

Aglaya left the room in a fit of irritation, and it was not until late in the evening, past eleven, when the prince was taking his departure that she said a word or two to him, privately, as she accompanied him as far as the front door.

"I should like you," she said, "not to come here to-morrow until evening, when the guests are all assembled here; you know there are to be guests, don't you?"

She spoke impatiently and with forced coldness; this was the first allusion she had made to the party of to-morrow.

She hated the idea of this party, everyone saw that; and she would probably have liked to quarrel about it with her parents, but pride and the sense of shame prevented her from broaching the subject.

The prince jumped to the conclusion that Aglaya, too, was nervous about him, and the impression he would make, and that she did not like to admit her anxiety; and this thought made him anxious.

"Yes, I am invited," he replied.

She was evidently in difficulties as to how best to go on.

"May I speak of something serious to you, for once in my life?" she asked, angrily; she was irritated at she knew not what and could not restrain her wrath.

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"Of course you may; I am very glad to listen," mutttered the prince.

Aglaya was silent a moment and then began again with evident dislike of her subject:

"I do not wish to quarrel with them about this; in some things they won't be reasonable. I always did feel a loathing for the laws which seem to guide mamma's conduct at times. I don't speak of father, for he cannot be expected to be anything but what he is. Mother is a generous-minded woman, I know; you just try to suggest anything *mean* to her, and you'll see. But she is such a slave to this miserable old wretch. I don't blame old Bielokonski alone; *she* is a wretched old creature, but she is able to hold all these good people in her two hands, and I like that in her, at all events. How mean it all is, and how funny; we were always middle class, thoroughly middle class people; *why* should we attempt to climb into the giddy heights of the fashionable world? My sisters are all for it; it's Prince S. they have to thank for poisoning their minds—Why are you so glad that Evgenie Pavlovitch is coming?"

"Listen to me, Aglaya," said the prince, "I do believe you are nervous that I shall commit myself, and make a fool of myself to-morrow at your smart party?"

"Nervous about you?" Aglaya blushed. "Why should I be nervous about you? What would it matter to me if you were to make ever such a fool of yourself? How can you say such a thing? What do you mean by 'commit yourself?' What a nasty vulgar expression; I suppose you intend to talk in that sort of way to-morrow evening? Look out a few more such expressions in your dictionary, do, you'll make a grand effect. I'm sorry that you seem to be able to come into a room as gracefully as you do; where did you learn the art? Do you think you can drink a cup of tea decently, when you know everybody is looking at you on purpose, to see how you do it?"

"Yes, I think I can."

"Can you? I'm sorry for it then, for I should have had a good laugh at you otherwise; do break *something* at least, in the drawing-room; upset the china vase, won't you? it's a valuable one; *do* break it. Mamma values it, and she'll go out of her mind—it was a present; she'll cry before everyone, you'll see. Wave your hand about, you know, as you always do, and just smash it. Sit down near it on purpose."

"On the contrary, I shall sit as far off it as I can, thanks for the hint."

"Ha, ha! then you are afraid you *will* wave your arms

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about. I wouldn't mind betting that you'll talk about some grand 'theme,' something serious and learned, and all that; how delightful, how polite that will be."

"I should think it would be very foolish indeed, unless it happens to come in appropriately."

"Look here, once for all," cried Aglaya, boiling over at last, "if I hear you talking about capital punishment, or the economical condition of Russia, or about Beauty redeeming the world, or anything of that sort, I'll—well of course I shall laugh and seem very pleased and all, but I warn you beforehand, don't look me in the face again. I'm serious now, mind, this time I *am really* serious." She certainly did say this very seriously, so much so, that she looked quite different from what she usually was, and the prince could not help noticing the fact; she did not seem to be joking in the slightest degree.

"Well you've put me into such a fright that I shall certainly make a fool of myself, and very likely break something too. I wasn't a bit alarmed before, but now I'm as nervous as can be. I shall certainly commit myself somehow."

"Then don't speak at all; sit still and don't talk."

"Oh, I can't do that, you know; I shall say something foolish out of pure 'funk,' and break something for the same excellent reason, I know I shall; perhaps I shall slip and fall on the slippery floor; I've done that before now, you know. I shall dream of it all night now. Why did you say anything about it?"

Aglaya looked *blackly* at him.

"Do you know what, I had better not come at all to-morrow; I'll plead sick-list and stay away," said the prince with decision.

Aglaya stamped her foot and grew quite pale with anger.

"Oh my goodness! just listen to that! 'better not come' when the party is on purpose for him! my goodness me! what a delightful thing it is to have to do with such a—such a stupid fellow as you are."

"Well, I'll come, I'll come," interrupted the prince, hastily, "and I'll give you my word of honour that I will sit out the whole evening, and not say a word all the while."

"I believe that's the best thing you can do; you said 'plead sick-list' just now; where in the world do you get hold of such funny expressions? Why do you talk to me like this? are you trying to irritate me, or what?"

"Forgive me, it's a schoolboy expression. I won't do it again; I know quite well, I see it, you know, that you are

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anxious on my account (now don't be angry), and it makes me very happy to see it. You wouldn't believe how frightened I am of misbehaving somehow, and how I like your instructions. But all this alarm is simply humbug and nonsense, you know, Aglaya; I give you my word it is; the pleasure will remain. I am *so* pleased that you are such a child, such a dear good child; how *charming* you can be if you like, Aglaya."

Aglaya wanted to be angry, of course, but suddenly some quite unsuspected feeling seized upon her heart, all in a moment.

"And won't you reproach me for all these rude words of mine—someday—afterwards?" she asked, of a sudden.

"What an idea, of course not, and what are you blushing for again? And there comes that frown once more. You've taken to looking much too black sometimes, Aglaya, much more than you used to. I know why it is."

"Be quiet, do be quiet."

"No, no, I had much better speak out. I have long wished to say it, and *have* said it, but not nearly enough, for you didn't believe me. Between us two there stands a being who—"

"Be quiet, be quiet, be quiet, be quiet," Aglaya struck in, suddenly, seizing his hand in hers, and gazing at him almost with terror.

At this moment she was called by someone. She broke loose from him with apparent joy and ran away. The prince was in a fever all night. It was strange, but he had suffered from fever for several nights in succession.

On this particular night, while in semi-delirium, he had an idea: what if on the morrow he were to have a fit before everybody? The thought seemed to freeze his blood within him. All night he fancied himself talking nonsense in some extraordinary society of strange persons. The chief point was that he was talking nonsense; he knew that he ought not to speak at all and yet he talked the whole time; he seemed to be trying to persuade them all to something. Evgenie and Hippolyte were among the guests, and appeared to be great friends.

He awoke towards nine o'clock with a headache, with confused ideas and strange impressions. For some reason or other he felt most anxious to see Rogojin, to see and talk to him, but what he wished to say he could not tell. Next he determined to go and see Hippolyte. His mind seemed to be in a confused state, so much so that the incidents of this morning left an imperfect, though strong, impression upon it.

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One of these incidents had been a visit from Lebedeff. Lebedeff came rather early—before ten—but he was tipsy already. Though the prince was not in an observant condition just now, yet he could not avoid seeing that for at least three days—ever since General Ivolgin had left the house—Lebedeff had been behaving very badly. He looked untidy and dirty at all times of the day, and it was said that he had begun to rage about in his own house and that his temper was very bad. As soon as he arrived this morning, he began to hold forth, beating his breast and apparently apologizing for something.

"I've—I've had a reward for my meanness—I've ha—had a box on the ear," he concluded, tragically.

"A box on the ear? from whom? and so early in the morning?"

"Early?" said Lebedeff, sarcastically, "time goes for nothing, even in physical recompences; but my box on the ear was not physical, it was moral."

He suddenly took a seat, very unceremoniously, and began his story. His tale was very disconnected; the prince frowned and made as though he would like to go out; but suddenly a few words struck him; he sat stiff and still with wonder—Lebedeff said some extraordinary things.

In the first place he began to wander on about a certain letter; the name of Aglaya Ivanovna came in. Then suddenly Lebedeff broke off and began to accuse the prince of something; he was apparently offended with the latter. At first he gave him to understand the prince had trusted him with his confidences as to "a certain person" (Nastasia Philipovna), but that of late his friendship had been thrust back into his bosom, and at last "his innocent question as to approaching family changes" had been curtly put aside, which Lebedeff declared, with tipsy tears, he could not bear; especially as he knew so much already both from Rogojin and Nastasia Philipovna and her friend, and from Varvara Ardalionovna, and even from Aglaya Ivanovna, through his daughter Vera. "And who told Lizabetha Prokofievna something in a profound secret, by letter? Who told her all about the movements of a certain person called Nastasia Philipovna? Who was the anonymous person, eh? tell me?"

"Surely not you?" cried the prince.

"Just so," said Lebedeff, with dignity; "and only this very morning, I have sent up a letter to the noble lady stating that I have a matter of great importance to communicate. She took the letter, I know she got it, and she received *me* too."

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"Have you just seen Lizabetha Prokofievna?" asked the prince, scarcely believing his ears.

"Yes, I saw her, and got the said box on the ear as mentioned. She chucked the letter back to me unopened and kicked me out of the house, morally, not physically, although not far off it."

"What letter do you mean she returned unopened?"

"What! didn't I tell you? Ha, ha, ha! I thought I had. Why, I received a letter, you know, to be handed over to her."

"From whom? To whom?"

But it was difficult, if not impossible, to extract anything from Lebedeff. All the prince could gather was, that the letter had been received very early and had a request written on the outside that it might be sent on to the address mentioned.

"Just as before, sir, just as before! to a certain personage and from a certain hand. The individual's name who wrote the letter is to be represented by the letter A.—"

"What? impossible! to Nastasia Philipovna? nonsense!" cried the prince.

"It was though, sir, I assure you, and if not to her then to Rogojin, which is the same thing. Mr. Hippolyte has had letters to forward too, and all from the individual whose name begins with an A.," smirked Lebedeff, with a hideous grin.

As Lebedeff had a way of jumping from subject to subject and forgetting what he had begun to talk about, the prince said nothing, but waited to give him time.

It was all very vague. Who had taken the letters, if letters there were?—Probably Vera—and how could Lebedeff have got them? in all probability, he had managed to steal the present letter from Vera and had himself gone over to Lizabetha Prokofievna with some idea in his head. So the prince concluded at last.

"You are mad!" he cried, indignantly.

"Not quite, esteemed prince," replied Lebedeff, with some acerbity. "I confess I thought of doing *you* the service of handing the letter over to yourself, but I decided that it would pay me better to deliver it up to the noble lady aforesaid, as I had informed her of everything hitherto by anonymous letters; so when I sent her up a note from myself, with the letter, you know, in order to fix a meeting for eight o'clock this morning, I signed it 'your secret correspondent.' They let me in at once—very quickly, I thought—by the back door, and the noble lady received me."

"Well? go on."

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"Oh, well, when I saw her she almost punched my head, as I say; in fact so nearly that one might almost say she did punch my head. She threw the letter in my face; she seemed to reflect first, as if she would have liked to keep it, but thought better of it and threw it in my face instead. 'If anybody can have been such a fool as to trust a man like you to deliver the letter,' says she, 'take it and deliver it!' Hey! she was grandly indignant. A fierce fiery character that, sir!"

"Where's the letter now?"

"Oh I've still got it, here!"

And he handed the prince the very letter from Aglaya to Gania which the latter showed with so much triumph to his sister at a later hour this very morning.

"This letter cannot be allowed to remain in your hands."

"It's for you—for you! I've brought it you on purpose!" cried Lebedeff excitedly. "Why, I'm yours again now, heart and hand, your slave; there was but a momentary pause in the flow of my love and esteem for you, *mea culpa, mea culpa*! as the Pope of Rome says."

"This letter should be sent on at once," said the prince, disturbed. "I'll hand it over myself."

"Wouldn't it be better, esteemed prince, wouldn't it be better—to—don't you know—"

Lebedeff made a strange and very lovely grimace; he twisted about in his chair, and did something or other, apparently symbolical, with his hands.

"What do you mean?" said the prince.

"Why, open it, for the time being; don't you know?" he said, most confidentially and mysteriously.

The prince jumped up so energetically that Lebedeff made a short run towards the door; having gained which strategic position, however, he stopped and looked back; perhaps the prince might be amenable to softer counsels!

"Oh Lebedeff, Lebedeff! can a man really sink to such depths of meanness as you seem to be wallowing in?" cried the prince sadly.

Lebedeff's face brightened up.

"Oh I'm a mean wretch—a mean wretch!" he said, approaching the prince once more and beating his breast with tears in his eyes.

"It's simply dishonesty, you know?"

"Dishonesty—it is, it is; that's the very word!"

"What in the world induces you to act so? you are nothing but a spy you know. Why did you write anonymously and

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worry the mind of so noble and generous a lady? Why should not Aglaya Ivanovna write a note to whomever she pleases? What did you mean to complain of to-day? What did you expect to get by it? What made you go at all?"

"Pure amiable curiosity, sir—I assure you—desire to do a service to a noble spirit; that's all; now I'm entirely yours again, your slave, hang me up to a tree if you like!"

"Did you go before Lizabetha Prokofievna in your present condition?" inquired the prince.

"No—oh no, fresher—more the correct card, sir—much; I only became like this after the humiliation I suffered there, I—"

"Well—that'll do; now leave me."

This injunction had to be repeated several times before the wretched man could be persuaded to move away. Even then he turned back at the door, came as far as the middle of the room, and there went through his mysterious motions designed to convey the suggestion that the prince should open the letter. He did not dare put his suggestion in words again.

After this performance, he smiled sweetly and left the room on tiptoes.

All this had been very painful to listen to.

One fact stood out certain and clear, and that was that poor Aglaya must have been worried into a state of great excitement and indecision, and mental torment (the torment of jealousy, the prince whispered to himself).

Undoubtedly in this inexperienced, but hot and proud little head, there were all sorts of plans continually forming, wild and impossible plans maybe; and the certainty of this fact so frightened the prince that he could not make up his mind what to do. Something must be done, that was clear.

He looked at the address of the letter once more; oh! he was not in the least degree alarmed about Aglaya writing such a letter; he could trust *her*; what he did not like about it was—he could not trust Gania.

However, he made up his mind, that he would himself take the note and deliver it; indeed, he went so far as to leave the house and walk up the road, but changed his mind when he had nearly reached Ptitsin's house. However, he luckily met Colia and commissioned him to deliver the letter to his brother as if direct from Aglaya.

Colia asked no questions but simply delivered the letter, and Gania consequently had no suspicion that it had passed through so many hands.

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Arrived at home, the prince sent for Vera Lebedeff and told her as much as was necessary, in order to relieve her mind, for she had been in a dreadful state of anxiety since she had missed the letter; she thought she must have lost it. She heard with horror that her father had taken it. The prince learned from her that she had on several occasions performed secret missions both for Aglaya and for Rogojin, without, however, having had the slightest idea that in so doing she might injure the prince in any way.

The prince, with one thing and another, was now so disturbed and confused, that when—a couple of hours or so later, a message came from Colia, that the general (Colia's father) was ill, he could hardly take the news in.

However, when he did master the fact, it acted upon him as a refresher and set him, mentally, on his feet again. He went at once to see Nina Alexandrovna, whither the general had been carried, of course, and stayed there until the evening. He could do no good there, but there are people whom to have by one is a blessing of itself at certain times. Colia was in a hysterically excited state; he cried continuously, but was running about all day, all the same; fetching doctors, of whom he collected three, going to the chemists, and so on.

The general was brought round but not "to himself." The doctors declared that the patient could not be said to be out of danger.

Varia and Nina Alexandrovna never left the sick man's bedside; Gania was excited and confused, but would not go upstairs, and was afraid even to look at the patient; he wrung his hands when the prince spoke to him, and said that "such a misfortune at such a moment" was most distressing.

The prince thought he knew what Gania meant by "such a moment."

Hippolyte was not in the house. Lebedeff turned up late in the afternoon; he had been asleep ever since his interview with the prince in the morning. He was in a very nervous and excited state, and cried with absolute sincerity over the sick general—mourning for him as though he were his own brother. He blamed himself out loud, but did not declare *why* he considered himself to blame. He repeated over and over again to Nina Alexandrovna that he alone was the guilty party—no one else—but that he had acted out of pure motives of curiosity, and that "the deceased," as he insisted upon calling the still living general, had been the greatest of geniuses.

He laid much stress on the genius of the sufferer, as if

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this idea must be one of immense solace in the present crisis.

Nina Alexandrovna—seeing his sincerity of feeling—said at last, and without the faintest suspicion of reproach in her voice :

"Come, come—don't cry! God will forgive you!"

Lebedeff was so impressed by these words, and the tone in which they were spoken, that he could not leave Nina Alexandrovna all the evening—in fact for several days;—till the general's death, indeed, he spent almost all his time—morning, noon, and night at his side.

Twice during the day a messenger came to Nina Alexandrovna from the Epanchins to inquire after the general's state.

When—late in the evening—the prince made his appearance in Lizabetha Prokofievna's drawing-room, he found it full of guests.

Mrs. Epanchin questioned him very fully about the general as soon as he appeared; and when old Princess Bielokonski wished to know "who this general was, and who was Nina Alexandrovna," she proceeded to explain in language, and in a manner which pleased the prince very much.

He himself, whilst relating all the circumstances of the general's illness, etc., to Lizabetha Prokofievna, "spoke beautifully," as Aglaya's sisters declared afterwards—"modestly, quietly, without gestures or too many words, and with great dignity; he had entered the room with propriety and grace, and he was very nicely dressed; he not only didn't 'fall down on the slippery floor,' as he had expressed it yesterday, but evidently made a very pleasant impression upon the assembled guests."

As for his own impression on entering the room and taking his seat, he instantly remarked that the company was not in the least such as Aglaya's words had led him to fear, and as he had dreamed of—in nightmare form—all night.

This was the first time in his life that he had seen a little corner of what was generally known by the terrible name of 'society." He had long thirsted, for reasons of his own, to penetrate the mysteries of the magic circle, and, therefore, this assemblage was of the greatest possible interest to him.

His first impression was one of fascination. Somehow or other he immediately concluded that all these people must have been born "on purpose to be together!" It seemed to him that the Epanchins were not having a party at all; that all these people must have been here always, and that he himself was one

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of them—returned among them after a long absence, but one of them, naturally and indisputably.

It would never strike him that all this refined simplicity and nobility of soul, and wit and personal dignity might possibly be no more than an artistic development. The majority of the guests—who were but an empty-headed lot after all—in spite of their aristocratic bearing—never guessed, in their self-satisfied composure, that much of what was good in them was merely artistic development—gloss!

The prince would never so much as suspect such a thing in the delight of his first impression.

He saw, for instance, that one old man—a dignitary evidently, and old enough to be his grandfather, broke off his own conversation in order to listen to *him*—a young and inexperienced man; and not only listened, but seemed to attach value to his opinion, and was so kind and amiable all through, and yet they were strangers and had never seen each other before. Perhaps what most appealed to the prince's impressionability was the refinement of the old man's courtesy towards him.

Perhaps the soil of his susceptibility was so fully prepared for the seed of "pleasant impression," that the latter took root there too easily.

Meanwhile all these good people—though friends of the family and of each other to a certain extent—were very far from being such intimate friends of the family and of each other as the prince concluded at the moment of his introduction.

There where those present who never would think of considering the Epanchins their equals, or anything like it. There were even some who hated one another cordially. For instance, old Princess Bielokonski had all her life despised the wife of the "dignitary," while the latter was very far from loving Lizabetha Prokofievna. The dignitary himself had been General Epanchin's protector from his youth up; and the general considered him so majestic a personage that he would have heartily despised himself if he had even for one moment allowed himself to pose as the great man's equal, or to think of him—in his fear and reverence—as anything under an Olympic God!

There were those present who had not met for years, and who had no feeling whatever for each other, unless it were disgust, and yet they had met to-night as though they had seen each other but yesterday in some thoroughly friendly and jovial assembly of kindred spirits.

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It was not a large party, however.

Besides Princess Bielokonski and the old "dignitary" (who was really a very great man) and his wife, there were present: an old military general—a count or baron with a German name, a man of great knowledge and craft in his profession, of great administrative ability—one of those men in the Russian service of whom all the world knows, excepting Russia itself. This general was Epanchin's immediate chief in the service, and the latter, in his generosity of disposition, considered him, too, in the light of a benefactor to his family, although, in point of fact, he was not so in the least, and by no means inclined to do him any special kindness.

Another guest present was an elderly, important-looking gentleman, a distant relative of Lizabetha Prokofievna. This gentleman was rich, held a good position, was a great talker, and even had the reputation of being "one of the dissatisfied," though not belonging to the dangerous sections of that class; he had the manners, rather, of the English aristocracy, and some of their tastes (especially in the matter of under-done roast beef, harness, and peculiar men-servants, &c.). He was a great friend of the dignitary's, and Lizabetha Prokofievna, for some reason or other, had got hold of the idea that this worthy intended at no distant date to offer the advantages of his hand and heart to Alexandra.

Besides the elevated and more solid individuals enumerated, there were present a few younger though not less brilliant (in their way) guests. Besides Prince S. and Evgenie Pavlovitch, we must name the eminent and fascinating Prince N.—once the vanquisher of female hearts all over Europe. This gentleman was no longer in the first bloom of youth—he was forty-five, but still very handsome. He was well off, and lived, as a rule, abroad. He was a good teller of stories. Then came a few guests belonging to a lower stratum of society—people who, like the Epanchins themselves, were to be met with occasionally in a far less exalted sphere. The Epanchins liked to draft among their more elevated guests a few picked examples of this lower stratum, and Lizabetha Prokofievna received much praise for this practice, which proved, her friends said, that she knew her place; while the Epanchins prided themselves upon the good opinion people formed of them.

One of the representatives of the middle class present to-day was a certain colonel—a technical gentleman and a great friend of Prince S., who had introduced him to the Epanchins. This person was very silent in society, but displayed on the fore-

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finger of his right hand a large ring, probably bestowed upon him for services of some sort.

There was also a literary man—a poet, a German by name, but a Russian poet, and a very respectable, well-behaved person all the same—the sort of man one could bring into society with impunity. This gentleman belonged to a German family of decided *Bourgeois* origin, but he had a knack of acquiring the protection of "big wigs," and of keeping in their favour. He had translated some great German poem into Russian verse, and claimed to have been a great friend of a famous Russian poet, since dead. (It is strange how great a multitude of literary people there are who have had the advantages of friendship with some great man of their own profession who is, unfortunately for them, dead.) The dignitary's wife had introduced this worthy to the Epanchins. This lady posed as the patroness of literary people, and she certainly had succeeded in obtaining pensions for a few of them, thanks to her influence with those in authority on such matters.

She was a lady of weight in her own way—her age was about forty-five, so that she was a very young wife for such an elderly husband as the decrepid dignitary was. She had been a beauty in her day and still loved, as many ladies of forty-five do love, to dress a little too smartly. Her intellect was nothing to boast of, and her literary knowledge very doubtful indeed. Literary knowledge was, however, with her as much a mania as was the love of gaudy dressing. Many a composition and translation was dedicated to her by her *Protégés*, and a few of these talented individuals had published some of their own letters to her—upon very weighty subjects.

This then was the society that the prince accepted at once as the real coin, as pure gold without alloy.

It so happened, however, that on this particular evening all these good people were in excellent humour and highly pleased with themselves. Every one of them felt that they were doing the Epanchins the greatest possible honour by their presence here. But alas! the prince never so much as suspected anything of the kind. For instance, he had no suspicion of the fact that the Epanchins, having in their eye so important a step as the marriage of their daughter, would never think of presuming to take this step without having previously "shown off" the proposed husband to the dignitary—the recognised protector of the family. The latter, too, though he would probably have received news of a great disaster to the Epanchin family with the greatest composure, would nevertheless have con-

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sidered it a great personal offence if they had dared to marry off their daughter without his advice, or we might almost call it, his *leave.*

The amiable and undoubtedly witty Prince N. could not but feel that he was as a sun, rising "for one night only" over the Epanchin drawing-room. He accounted them immeasurably his inferiors, and it was this feeling which caused his special amiability and delightful ease and grace towards these same Epanchins. He knew very well that he must tell some story this evening for the edification and fascination of the company, and prepared for the demonstration with the inspiration of anticipatory triumph.

The prince, when he heard the story afterwards, felt that he had never yet come across so wonderful a humourist, or such remarkable talent and naiveness as was shown by this man; and yet if he had only known it, this story was the oldest, stalest, and most worn-out old yarn that ever was, and every drawing-room in town was sick to death of it; and it was only in the innocent Epanchin household that it passed as a new and brilliant tale—as the sudden and striking inspiration of the memory of a striking and brilliant man.

Even the German, the poet, though as amiable as possible, felt that he was doing the house the greatest of honours by his presence in it.

But the prince only looked at the glazy side; he did not turn the coat and look at the shabby lining.

Aglaya did not foresee that particular calamity. She herself looked wonderfully beautiful this evening. All three sisters were dressed—if not grandly—at least very tastefully; and were "got up" altogether with special care.

Aglaya sat next to Evgenie Pavlovitch, and laughed and talked to him with an unusual display of friendliness. Evgenie Pavlovitch himself behaved with rather more "solidity" than usual, probably out of respect to the dignitary. Evgenie had been known in society for a long while. He had appeared at the Epanchins' to-day with crape in his hat, and Princess Bielokonski had commended this action on his part. Not every society man would have worn crape for "such an uncle." Lizabetha Prokofievna had liked it also, but was too preoccupied to take much notice of sublunary matters. The prince remarked that Aglaya looked attentively at him two or three times, and seemed to be satisfied with his behaviour.

Little by little he became very happy indeed. All his late perturbation of mind and anxieties and worries (after his con-

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versation with Lebedeff) now appeared to him to have been merely so many bad dreams—impossible, even laughable imaginings.

He did not speak much, only answering such questions as were put to him, and gradually settled down into unbroken silence, listening to what went on, and steeped in perfect satisfaction and contentment.

Little by little a sort of inspiration prepared itself within him, ready to spring into life at the right moment. When he did begin to speak, it was accidentally, and in response to a question, and apparently without any special object.

VII.

WHILE he feasted his eyes upon Aglaya, as she talked merrily with Evgenie and Prince N., suddenly the old gentleman, the Anglomaniac, who was talking to the "dignitary" in another corner of the room, apparently telling him a story about something or other—suddenly this gentleman pronounced the name of "Nicolai Andreevitch Pavlischeff" out loud. The prince quickly turned round towards that corner of the room and listened.

The conversation had been on the subject of land, and the present disorder of the land laws, and so on; but there must have been something amusing said, for the old man had begun to laugh at his companion's heated expressions.

The latter was describing in eloquent words how—in consequence of the then condition of land-owning—he was obliged to sell a beautiful estate in the —sky government, not because he wanted ready money—in fact, he was obliged to sell it at half its value.

At this point of the story, General Epanchin suddenly appeared at the prince's elbow, and, noticing how interested the latter had become in the conversation going on opposite, said to him, in a low tone:

"That gentleman—Ivan Petrovitch—is a relation of your late friend, Mr. Pavlischeff. You wanted to find some of his relations, did you not?"

The general, who had been talking to his chief up to this moment, had observed the prince's solitude and silence, and

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was anxious to draft him into some conversation, where he might take a moderate, careful share of the talk, and perhaps conciliate some of the big wigs present, if he were lucky.

"Lef Nicolaievitch was a ward of Nicolai Andreevitch Pavlischeff after the death of his own parents," he remarked, meeting Ivan Petrovitch's eye.

"Very happy to meet him, I'm sure," remarked the latter. "I remember Lef Nicolaievitch well. When General Epanchin introduced us just now, I recognised you at once, prince. You are very little changed, though I saw you last as a child of some ten or eleven years old. There was something in your features, I suppose, that—"

"You saw me as a child!" exclaimed the prince, with more than ordinary surprise.

"Oh! yes, long ago," continued Ivan Petrovitch, "while you were living with my cousin at Zlatoverhoff. You don't remember me; no, I daresay you don't; you had some malady at the time, I remember. It was so serious that I was surprised to see you up and about—"

"No; I remember nothing of it." said the prince. A few more words of explanation, words which were spoken without the smallest excitement by his companion, but which evoked the greatest agitation in the prince's heart; and it was discovered that two old ladies to whose care the prince had been left by Pavlischeff, and who lived at Zlatoverhoff, were also relations of Ivan Petrovitch.

The latter had no idea and could give no information as to why Pavlischeff had taken so large an interest in the little prince, his ward.

"In point of fact I don't think I thought much about it," said the old fellow.

He seemed to have a wonderfully good memory, however, for he told the prince all about the two old ladies, Pavlischeff's cousins, who had taken care of him, (the prince) and whom, he declared, he had taken to task for being too rigorous with the prince as a small sickly boy—the elder sister at least; the younger had been kinder, he recollected. They both now lived in another (the—sky) government, in a small but very beautiful little estate left to them by Pavlischeff. The prince listened to all this with eyes sparkling with ecstasy and delight.

He declared in his turn with unusual warmth that he would never forgive himself that he had allowed himself to travel about in the interior during these last six months without having hunted up his two old friends.

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He declared, further, that he had intended to go every day but had always been prevented by circumstances; but that now he would promise himself the pleasure—however far off he would find them out; and so Ivan Petrovitch *really* knew Natalia Nikitishna, wasn't she a *dear* old thing; and Martha Nikitishna! Ivan Petrovitch must excuse him, but really he was not quite fair on dear old Martha. She was firm, severe, perhaps; but then what else could she be with such a little idiot as he was then. (Ha, ha.) He really was an idiot then, Ivan Petrovitch must know, though he might not believe it. (Ha, ha.) So he had really seen him there. Good heavens! and was he really and truly and actually a cousin of old Pavlischeff's."

"I assure you of it," laughed Ivan Petrovitch, gazing amusedly at the prince.

"Oh! I didn't say it because I *doubt* the fact, you know (ha, ha.) How could I doubt such a thing. (Ha, ha, ha.) I made the remark because—because Nicholai Andreevitch Pavlischeff was such a grand old fellow, don't you see; such a high souled man, he really was, I assure you."

The prince did not exactly pant with ecstasy, but he "seemed almost to *choke* out of pure simplicity and goodness of heart," as Adelaida expressed it on talking the party over with her fiancé, the Prince S., next morning.

"But, my goodness me," laughed Ivan Petrovitch, "why can't I be cousin to even a grand old fellow?"

"Oh, dear!" cried the prince, confused and trying to hurry his words out, and growing more and more animated every moment: "I've gone and said another stupid thing. I don't know what to say. I—I didn't mean that, you know—"

The prince trembled all over. Why was he so agitated? Why had he flown into such unusual transports of delight without any apparent reason? He had far outshot the measure of joy consistent with the subject or occasion, apparently. Why was this? it would be difficult to say.

He was in a distinctly *grateful* mood. He felt warmly and deeply grateful to someone for something or other—perhaps to Ivan Petrovitch; but likely enough to all the guests, individually, and collectively. He was much too happy.

Ivan Petrovitch began to stare at him with some surprise; the "dignitary," too, looked at him with considerable attention; Princess Bielokonski glared at him angrily and compressed her lips.

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Prince N., Evgenie, Prince S., and the girls all broke off their own conversations and listened.

Aglaya seemed a little startled; as for Lizabetha Prokofievna she was frightened out of her wits.

This was odd of Lizabetha Prokofievna and her daughers. They had themselves decided that it would be better if the prince did not talk all the evening. Yet seeing him sitting silent and alone, but perfectly happy, they had exerted themselves to draft him into one of the groups of talkers around the room; and now that he *was* in the midst of a talk they became more than ever anxious and frightened on his account.

"That he was a grand man is perfectly true; you are quite right," repeated Ivan Petrovitch, but seriously this time; "he was a fine and a worthy fellow—worthy, one may say, of the highest respect," he added, more and more seriously at each pause; "and it is agreeable to see, on your part, such—"

"Wasn't it this same Pavlischeff about whom there was a strange story in connection with some abbot? I don't remember who the abbot was, but I remember at one time everybody was talking about it," remarked the old dignitary.

"Yes—Abbot Gurot, a Jesuit," said Ivan Petrovitch.

"Yes, that's the sort of thing our grandest and best fellows are apt to do; a man of rank, too, and rich—he held the post of Lord Chamberlain once—a man who, if he had continued to serve, might have done anything; and then to go and throw up service and everything else in order to go over to Roman Catholicism and turn Jesuit—openly too—almost triumphantly; by jove! it was positively a mercy that he died when he did—it was indeed—everyone said so at the time."

The prince was beside himself.

"Pavlischeff?—Pavlischeff turned Roman Catholic? impossible!" he cried, in horror.

"H'm! impossible is rather a strong word," said Ivan Petrovitch, "you must allow that yourself, my dear prince,—however, of course you value the memory of the deceased so very highly; and he certainly was the kindest and best of men, to which fact, by the way, I ascribe, more than to anything else, the success of the abbot over his religious convictions.

"But you may ask me, if you please, how much trouble and worry I, personally, had over that very business, and especially with this same Gurot.

"Would you believe it?" he continued, addressing the

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dignitary, "they actually tried to make a claim by the deceased's will, and I had to resort to the very strongest measures in order to bring them to their senses. I assure you they knew their cue, did these gentlemen—wonderful!—thank goodness all this was in Moscow, and I got the count, you know, to help me and we soon brought them to their senses."

"You wouldn't believe how you have pained and astonished me," cried the prince.

"Very sorry; but in point of fact, you know, it was all nonsense and would have ended in smoke, as usual—I'm sure of that. Last year—" he turned to the old man again, "Countess K. joined some Roman Convent abroad; our people never seem to be able to offer any resistance so soon as they get into the hands of these—intriguers—especially abroad."

"That is all thanks to our *lassitude*, I think," replied the old man with authority. "And then their way of preaching, they have their pretty manner of doing it, and all that; and they know how to startle one, too. I got quite a fright myself in '32, in Vienna, I assure you; but I didn't cave in to them, I ran away instead, ha, ha!"

"Come, come, I've always heard that you ran away with the beautiful Countess Levitsky that time—throwing up everything in order to do it—and not from the Jesuits at all," said Princess Bielokonski, suddenly.

"Well, yes—but we call it from the Jesuits, you know, it comes to the same thing," laughed the old fellow, delighted with the pleasant recollection.

"You seem to be very religious," he continued, kindly, addressing the prince, "which is a thing one meets so seldom now-a-days among young people."

The prince was listening with wide open mouth and still in a condition of excited agitation. The old man was evidently extremely interested with our friend, and anxious to know him better.

"Pavlischeff was a man of bright intellect and a good christian, a sincere christian," said the prince, suddenly; "how could he possibly embrace a faith which is unchristain; Roman Catholicism is, so to speak, simply the same thing as unchristianity," he added with flashing eyes which looked straight before him, but which seemed to take in everybody in the room in their inspired expression.

"Come, that's a little *too* strong, isn't it?" murmured the old man, glancing towards Ivan Petrovitch in surprise.

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"How do you make out that the Roman Catholic religion is *unchristian*? what is it then?" asked Ivan Petrovitch, turning towards the prince.

"It is not a christian faith, in the first place," said the latter, in the extremity of mental agitation, and in a state of excitement quite out of proportion to the necessity of the moment, "that is the first reason; the second is that Roman Catholicism is, in my opinion, worse than Atheism itself. Yes—that is my opinion. Atheism only preaches nil, but Romanism goes further; it preaches a disfigured, distorted Christ—distorted and abused by itself, an inconsistent Christ. It preaches Anti-christ, it does—I assure you, I swear it. This is my own personal conviction and I tell you it has tormented me over and over again. The Roman Catholic believes that the church on earth cannot stand without universal temporal Power and Empire; he cries 'non possumus;' in my opinion the Roman Catholic religion is not a faith at all but simply a continuation of the old Roman Empire, and everything about it is subordinated to this idea—beginning with its faith. The pope has seized territories and an earthly throne, and has held them with the sword.

"And so the thing has gone on in that groove, only that to the sword they have added lying, intrigue, deceit, fanaticism, superstition, swindling;—they have played fast and loose with the most sacred, and the brightest and best feelings of men and nations;—they have exchanged everything—everything for money, for mean earthly *power*. And is this not the teaching of Anti-christ? How could the upshot of all this be other than Atheism? Atheism is the child of Roman Catholicism—it proceeded from these Romans themselves, though perhaps they would not believe it; it grew and fattened on hatred of its parents; it is the progeny of their lies and spiritual feebleness—Atheism! In our country it is only among the select classes that you find unbelievers; men who have lost the root or spirit of their faith; but abroad whole masses of the common people are beginning to profess unbelief,—at first because of the darkness and lies by which they were surrounded; but now out of fanaticism, and loathing for the church and christianity!"

The prince paused to get breath. He had spoken with extraordinary rapidity; he was very pale and panted painfully.

All present interchanged glances, but at last the old man burst out laughing frankly. Prince N. took out his eye-glass and cocked it to have a good look at the speaker. The Ger-

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man poet came out of his corner and crept nearer the table, smiling a nasty smile.

"You exaggerate the matter very much," said Ivan Petrovitch, hesitating and apparently not quite sure of himself, "there are, in the foreign churches, many representatives of their various faiths who are worthy of every sort of respect and esteem."

"Oh, but I did not speak of individual representatives of churches; I was merely talking about Roman Catholicism, and its essence, and spirit—of Rome itself. A church can never entirely disappear; I never hinted at such a thing."

"Agreed that all this may be true, but we surely need not discuss a subject which belongs to the domain of Theology."

"Oh, no, oh, no, not to Theology alone, I assure you. Why, Socialism is the progeny of Romanism and of the Romanistic spirit and essence. But it and its brother Atheism proceeded from Despair, from the inconsistency of Catholicism with moral sense, in order that it might replace in itself the best moral power of religion, in order to appease the *spiritual* thirst of parched Humanity and save it; not by Christ, but by force. 'Don't dare to believe in God, don't dare possess any individuality, any personality, *fraternité ou la Mort*; two million heads.' 'You shall know them by their works,' we are told. And we must not suppose that all this is harmless and safe for ourselves. Oh, no; we must resist, we must fortify, and quickly, quickly; we must let *our* Christ shine forth upon the buttresses of the Western nations, our Christ whom we have preserved intact, and whom they have not so much as known. Not as slaves allowing ourselves to be caught by the hooks of the Jesuist anglers, but by carrying our religion to *them*. We must stand before them at the head of the Christian Army; and don't let it be said of *us* that *our* preaching is 'pretty' or graceful, as someone expressed it just now."

"But excuse me, excuse me!" cried Ivan Petrovitch, very considerably disturbed, and looking around with an expression of unmistakable timidity. "Your ideas are, of course, most praiseworthy, and in the highest degree patriotic; but you exaggerate the matter terribly; and it would be better if we dropped the subject."

"No, sir, I do not exaggerate, I understate the matter, if anything, undoubtedly understate it, simply because I cannot express myself as I should like, but—"

"Allow me to speak, I—"

The prince was silent. He sat straight up in his chair and glared at Ivan Petrovitch with fiery eyes.

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"It seems to me that you have been too painfully impressed with the news of what happened to your good benefactor?" said the old dignitary kindly, and with the utmost calmness of demeanour. "You are excitable, perhaps as the result of your solitary life. If you would make up your mind to live more among your fellows in society, I trust, I am sure, that the world would be glad to welcome you, as a remarkable young man; and you would soon find your too sensitive animation subside to safer bounds; and you would see that all these things are much simpler than you think; and, besides being very rare occurrences in themselves, come about, in my opinion, principally from *ennui* and partly from satiety."

"Exactly, exactly! that is a gloriously true thought!" cried the prince, "from *ennui*, from our *ennui*, but not from satiety. Oh, no, you are wrong there; say from *thirst* if you like; from inflammation, the thirst of fever. And please do not suppose that this is so small a matter that we may have a laugh at it all and dismiss it; we must be able to forsee our disasters and arm against them. We Russians no sooner arrive at the brink of the water, and realize that we are really at the brink, than we are so delighted with the outlook that in we plunge and swim to the furthest point we can see. Why is this? You say you are surprised at Pavlischeff's action; you ascribe it to madness, to softness of heart, and what not, but it is not so.

"This Russian eccentricity of ours, not only astonishes ourselves, all Europe wonders at our conduct in such cases; for, if one of us goes over to Roman Catholicism, he is sure to become a Jesuit at once, and a rabid one into the bargain; if one of us becomes an Atheist he must needs begin to insist on the prohibition of faith in God by force, that is, by the sword.

"Why is this? why does he then exceed all bounds at once? don't you know? because he has found land at last, land that he sought in vain before; and because his soul is rejoiced to find it. He has found land and he throws himself upon it and kisses it.

"Oh, it is not from vanity alone, it is not from wretched feelings of vanity that Russians become Atheists and Jesuits; but from spiritual thirst, from anguish of longing after higher things, after dry firm land, and anguish for the loss of foothold on their own *terra firma* which they never believed in because they never knew it.

"It is so easy for a Russian to become an Atheist, far more so than for any other nationality in the world. And not only does a Russian 'become an Atheist,' but he actually *believes in*

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Atheism, just as though he had found a new faith, not perceiving that he has pinned his faith to *nil*. Such is our anguish of thirst.

"'Whoso has no country has no God.'

"That is not my own expression; it is the expression of an old merchant, one of the '*Starovers*' or old believers, whom I once met while travelling. He did not say exactly these words. I think his expression was:

"'Whoever denies his country denies his God.'

"But let but these thirsty Russian souls find, like Columbus' discoverers, a new world; let them find the Russian world, let them search and discover all the gold and treasure that lies hid in the bosom of their own land. Show them the restitution of lost humanity, in the future, by *Russian* thought alone, and by means of the God and of the Christ of *our Russian* faith, and you will see how mighty and just and wise and good a giant will rise up before the eyes of the astonished and frightened world; astonished because they expect nothing but the sword-force from us, if anything; because they think they will get nothing out of us without a spice of barbarism. This has been the case up to now, and the longer matters go on as they are now proceeding, the more clear will be the truth of what I say; and I—"

But at this moment something happened which put a most unexpected end to the orator's speech. All this heated *tirade*, this outflow of passionate words and ecstatic ideas which seemed to hustle and tumble over each other as they hurried out of his mouth, bore evidence of something dangerous, of some unusually disturbed mental condition of the young fellow who had "boiled over" in such a remarkable manner, without any apparent sufficient reason.

Of those who were present, such as knew the prince listened to his sally in a state of alarm, some with a feeling of mortification; it was so unlike his usual timid self constraint; so inconsistent with his usual taste and tact in similar cases and with his instinctive consciousness of the higher proprieties. They could not understand the origin of the outburst; it could not be simply the news of Pavlischeff's perversion. In the ladies' corner the prince was regarded as little better than a lunatic, and Princess Bielokonski admitted afterwards that "another minute and she would have bolted."

The two old gentlemen looked quite alarmed. The old general (Epanchin's chief) sat and glared at the prince with displeasure and severity. The colonel sat immovable. Even

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the German poet grew a little pale, though he grinned his usual disagreeable grin as he looked around to see what the others would do.

In point of fact it is quite possible that the matter would have ended in a very common-place, but natural, way in a few minutes; the undoubtedly astonished, but now more collected Ivan Petrovitch had several times endeavoured to interrupt the prince, and not having succeeded he was now preparing to take firmer and more vigorous measures to attain his end. In another minute or two he would probably have made up his mind to lead the prince quietly and friendly out of the room, on the plea of the latter looking so ill (and it was more than likely that Ivan Petrovitch was right in his belief that the prince *was* actually ill), but it so happened that destiny had another upshot in store.

At the beginning of the evening, when the prince first came into the room, he had sat down as far as possible from the china vase which Aglaya had spoken of the day before.

Will it be believed that, after Aglaya's alarming words, an ineradicable conviction took possession of the prince's mind that, however he might try to avoid this vase next day, he must certainly break it? and yet this was so.

During the evening other impressions began to awaken and develop in his mind, as we have seen above, and he forgot his presentiment. But when Pavlischeff was mentioned and the general introduced him to Ivan Petrovitch, he had changed his place, and went over nearer to the table; when, it so happened, he took the chair which was exactly under the beautiful vase, standing on its pedestal behind him, just about on a level with his elbow.

As he spoke his last few words he had risen suddenly from his seat with a wave of his hand and arm, and a general startled cry instantly followed.

The huge vase swayed backwards and forwards; it seemed to be uncertain whether or no to topple over on to the head of one of the two old men, but eventually determined to go the other way, and came crashing down, just on to the spot where the startled German had been sitting; he darted out of the way in terror, and the vase fell to the ground.

The crash, the cry, the sight of the splinters of valuable china covering the carpet, the alarm of the company—what all this was to the poor prince it would be difficult to convey to the mind of the reader, or for him to imagine.

However, we cannot but remark upon one fact, and that is

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that not all the alarm and vexation and mortification which the prince felt over the accident were nearly so powerful in their action upon the prince, as was the deep impression which he felt at the moment, strong enough to subdue and drive out all the rest, of the almost supernatural prophetical truth of his conviction. He stood still in alarm—in almost mystical alarm, for a moment; the next all mists seemed to clear away from his eyes, he was conscious of nothing but light and joy and ecstasy; his breath came and went; but the moment passed. Thank God it was not that. He drew a long breath and looked around.

For some minutes he did not seem to comprehend the excitement around him; that is, he comprehended it completely and saw everything, but he stood aside, as it were, like the invisible "I" in a story, as though he were an outsider who had nothing to do with what was going on, though it pleased him to take an interest in the actors of the play going on around him.

He saw them gather up the broken bits of china; he heard the loud talking of the guests and observed how pale Aglaya looked and how very strangely she was gazing at him. There was no hatred in her eyes, and no anger whatever. Her eyes were full of alarm for him and sympathy, while she looked around at the others with flashing, angry looks—his heart filled with a sweet pain as he gazed at her.

At length he observed, to his amazement, that all had taken their seats again, and were laughing and talking as though nothing had happened. Another minute and the laughter was pronounced—they were laughing at *him*, and laughing at his dumb stupor—laughing kindly and merrily; several of them spoke to him, and spoke so kindly and cordially, especially Lizabetha Prokofievna—she was saying the kindest possible things to him.

Suddenly he became aware that General Epanchin was tapping him on the shoulder; Ivan Petrovitch was laughing too, but still more kind and sympathizing was the old dignitary—he took the prince by the hand and pressed it warmly, then he tapped the prince's palm gently with his own, and quietly and very kindly begged him to recollect himself—speaking to him exactly as he would have spoken to a little frightened child, which pleased the prince wonderfully; next the old fellow seated him beside himself.

The prince gazed into his face with great satisfaction, but still seemed to have no power to speak—his breath seemed to

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be compressed too tightly in his chest. The old man's face pleased him greatly.

"How—do you really forgive me?" he said at last. "And —and Lizabetha Prokofievna too?" The laugh increased, tears came into the prince's eyes, he could not believe in all this kindness—he was fascinated.

"The vase certainly was a very beautiful one, I remember it here for fifteen years—yes, quite that!" remarked Ivan Petrovitch.

"My goodness! what a dreadful calamity! A wretched vase smashed, and a man half dead with remorse about it," said Lizabetha Prokofievna, loudly. "What made you so dreadfully startled, Lef Nicolaievitch?" she added, a little timidly. "Come, that's enough, my dear boy! cheer up; you really alarm me, taking the accident so to heart."

"Do you forgive me *all—all*, besides the vase, I mean?" said the prince, rising from his seat once more, but the old gentleman caught his hand and drew him down again—he seemed unwilling to let him go.

"*C'est très-scurieux et c'est très-sérieux*," he whispered across the table to Ivan Petrovitch, rather loudly. Probably the prince heard him.

"So that I have not offended any of you; you will not believe how happy I am to be able to think so. It is as it should be. As if I *could* offend any one here! I offend you again by even suggesting such a thing."

"Calm yourself, my dear fellow. You are exaggerating again; you really have no occasion to be so grateful to us. It is a feeling which does you great credit, but an exaggeration for all that."

"I am not exactly thanking you, I am only feeling a growing affection for you—it makes me happy to look at you. I daresay I am speaking very foolishly, but I *must* speak—I must explain, if it be out of nothing better than deep respect."

All he said and did was said and done abruptly, confusedly, feverishly—very likely the words he spoke, as often as not, were not those he wished to say. He seemed to inquire by his glances around the room whether he *might* speak. His eyes lighted on Princess Bielokonski.

"All right, my friend, talk away, talk away!" she remarked, "only don't lose your breath; you were panting when you began and look what you've come to now! Don't be afraid of speaking—all these gentlemen have seen far stranger people than yourself, you don't astonish *them*. You are nothing out-

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of-the-way odd, you know; only you were unlucky enough to smash the vase, and that alarmed your feelings a little."

The prince listened smiling.

"Wasn't it you," he said, suddenly turning to the old gentleman, "who saved the student Porkunoff and a clerk called Shoabrin from being sent to Siberia, two or three months since?"

The old dignitary blushed a little, and murmured that the prince had better not excite himself further.

"But I have heard of *you*," continued the prince, adressing Ivan Petrovitch, "that when some of your villagers were burned out you gave them wood gratis to build up their houses again, though these men were no longer your serfs and had already begun to behave badly towards you."

"Oh, come, come! you are exaggerating the thing," said Ivan Petrovitch, beaming with satisfaction, all the same. He was right, however, in this instance, for the report had reached the prince's ears in a mutilated form.

"And you, princess," he began, addressing Princess Bielokonski, with a bright smile on his face, "was it not you who received me in Moscow, six months since, as kindly as though I had been your own son, in response to a letter from Lizabetha Prokofievna, and gave me one piece of advice, which you offered me again as to your own son, and which I shall never forget. Do you remember?"

"How you climb unnecessary walls," said the old lady, with annoyance; "you are a good fellow, but very funny. One gives you a halfpenny, and you are as grateful as though one had saved your life. You think this is praiseworthy on your part, do you? It is disagreeable, my lad, it is indeed."

She seemed to be very nearly angry, but suddenly burst out laughing, and a kind, good laugh it was.

Lizabetha Prokofievna's face brightened up too; so did that of General Epanchin.

"I told you, Lef Nicolaievitch was a man—a man who—if only he would not get out of breath so dreadfully, as Princess Bielokonski expressed it," said the latter, with delight.

Aglaya alone seemed sad and depressed; her eyes blazed with indignation too, now and then.

"He really is a very charming young fellow," whispered the old dignitary to Ivan Petrovitch.

"I came into this room with a feeling of anxiety in my heart," continued the prince, with ever-growing agitation, speaking quicker and quicker, and with increasing strange-

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ness and animation. "I—I was afraid of you all, and afraid of myself. I was most alarmed for myself. When I returned to Petersburg, I promised myself to make a point of seeing our greatest men, and members of our oldest families—the old families like my own. I am among princes like myself, am I not? I wished to know you, and it was necessary, very very necessary. I had always heard so much that was *evil* said of you all—more evil than good; as to how little and select were your interests, how absurd your habits, how imperfect was your education, and so on—there is so much written and said about you and yours. I came here to-day with anxious curiosity; I wished to see for myself and form my own convictions as to whether it were true that the whole of this upper stratum of Russian society is *worthless*, has outlived its time, has existed too long, and is only fit to die down, and yet is dying with petty, spiteful warring against that which is destined to supersede it and take its place—hindering the Coming Men, and knowing not that itself is in a dying condition. I did not fully believe in this view of the matter even before, for there never was such a class among us—excepting perhaps at court, or accidental instances of individuals in uniform; but now there is not even that much, is there? The whole system has vanished, has it not?"

"No, not a bit of it," said Ivan Petrovitch, bursting into a sarcastic laugh.

"Don't interrupt him," said Princess Bielokonski, impatiently.

"*Laissez-le dire.* Let him go on; he is trembling all over with excitement; don't annoy him," said the old man, in a warning whisper.

The prince certainly was beside himself.

"Well? What have I seen?" he continued. "I have seen men of graceful simplicity of intellect; I have seen an old man who is not above speaking kindly and even *listening* to a boy like myself; I see before me persons who can understand, who can forgive—kind, good Russian hearts—hearts almost as kind and cordial as I met abroad, hardly a whit inferior. Imagine how delighted I must have been and how surprised. Oh, let me express this feeling. I have so often heard, and I have even believed myself, that in the world there is nothing but empty form, and that reality has vanished; but I now see for myself that this can never be the case *here*, among *us*—it may be the order elsewhere, but not among *us*. Surely you are not all Jesuits and deceivers. I heard Prince N.'s story just now. Was it

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not simple-minded—*inspired* humour? Was it not sincere goodness of soul that could prompt such simple fun as abounded there? Could such words as these come out of the lips of a man who is *dead?*—of a man whose heart and talents are dried up for ever? Could dead men and women have treated me so kindly as you all have been treating me to-day? Is there not material for the future in all this—for good hope? Can such people fail to *understand*—can such men retrograde—fall away from reality?"

"Once more let us beg you to be calm, my dear lad; we'll talk of all this another time—I shall do so with the greatest pleasure, for one," said the old dignitary, with a kind smile.

Ivan Petrovitch grunted and twisted round in his chair. General Epanchin moved about nervously. The latter's chief had struck up a conversation with the wife of the dignitary, and took no notice whatever of the prince, but the old lady very often glanced at him, and listened to what he was saying.

"No. Do you know, I had better speak," continued the prince, with a new outburst of feverish agitation, and turning towards the old man with an air of confidential trustfulness. "Yesterday, Aglaya Ivanovna forbade me to talk, and even specified the particular subjects I must not touch upon—she knows well enough that I am odd when I get upon these matters. I am nearly twenty-seven years old, and yet I know I am little better than a child. I have no right to express my ideas, and said so long ago; only in Moscow, with Rogojin, did I ever speak absolutely freely! He and I read Pouschkin together—all his works. Rogojin knew nothing of Pouschkin, had not even heard his name.

"I am always afraid of compromising a great Thought or Idea by my absurd appearance. I have no presence, I know. I always make exactly the wrong gestures—contradictory gestures, so to speak—and therefore I humiliate the Thought, and raise a laugh instead of doing my subject justice. I have no sense of Proportion, either, and that is almost the chief thing. I know it would be much better if I were always to sit still and say nothing. When I do so, I always appear to be quite a reasonable sort of person, and I know I ought to do it, as a rule.

"But now I must speak; it is better that I should. I began to speak because you looked so very kindly at me; you have such a truly beautiful face. I promised Aglaya Ivanovna yesterday that I would not speak all the evening."

"Really?" said the old man, smiling.

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"But, at times, I can't help thinking that I am wrong in feeling so about it, you know; sincerity is none the worse for gesture during speaking, is it? Gesture does it no harm, and perhaps strengthens the impression made?"

"Sometimes."

"I want to explain all to you—everything—everything. I know you think me an Utopian, don't you—an idealist? Oh, no! I'm not, indeed—my ideas are all so simple. You don't believe me? you are smiling. Do you know, I am sometimes very wicked—for I lose my faith? This evening I came along here, and thought to myself, 'What shall I talk about? How am I to begin, so that they may be able to understand partially, at all events, what I am driving at?'

"How afraid I was, on your account—dreadfully afraid; and yet, how *could* I be afraid—was it not shameful of me? Was I afraid of finding a bottomless abyss of retrograde and selfishness? Ah! that's why I am so happy at this moment, because I find there is no bottomless abyss at all—but all good, healthy material to work upon.

"It is not such a very dreadful circumstance that we are an odd sort of people, is it? for we really are a very funny lot, you know—careless, reckless sort of folk, easily wearied of anything. We don't look thoroughly into matters—don't care to understand things. We are all like this—both you and I, and all of them. Why, here are you, now. You are not a bit angry with me for calling you 'funny,' are you? and, if so, surely there is good material in you for future hopes? Do you know, I sometimes think it is a good thing to be funny. We can forgive one another more easily, and be kind to one another. No one can begin by being perfect—there is much one cannot understand in life at first; in order to attain to perfection, one must begin by failing to understand much of what is. And if we take in knowledge too quickly, we very likely are not taking it in at all.

"I say all this to you—you who by this time understand so much of what is—and doubtless failed to understand so much, also.

"I am not afraid of you any longer. You are not angry that a mere boy should say such words to you, are you?

"You are laughing, Ivan Petrovitch. You think I am alarmed for other classes of people—that I am *their* advocate, a democrat and an orator of Equality?" The prince laughed hysterically; he had several times burst into these little, short bursts of laughter. "Oh, no—it is for you, for

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myself, and for all of us together, that I am alarmed. I am a prince of old family myself, and I am sitting among my peers; and I am talking like this in hope of saving us all; in the hope that our Class will not disappear altogether without a blow in the darkness—unobservant of, and unguessing its danger—blaming everything around it, and losing ground every day. Why should we disappear and give our place to others, when we may still, if we choose, remain in the front rank and in the van of the battle? Let us be slaves now, that we may become lords in due season!"

He began to struggle to get upon his feet again, but the old man still restrained him, gazing at him with increased perturbation as he went on.

"Listen—I know it is best not to speak. It is best simply to give a good example—simply to put a beginning to the work. I have done this—I have begun, and—and—oh! *can* anyone be unhappy, really? Oh! what does grief matter—what does misfortune matter, if one *knows how* to be happy? Do you know, I cannot understand how anyone can pass by a green tree, and not feel happy only to look at it? how anyone can talk to a man and not feel delight in hearing him? Oh, it is my own fault that I cannot express myself well enough; but there are lovely things at every step I take—things which even the most lost and miserable man in the world recognises as beautiful. Look at a little child—look at God's lovely day-dawn—look at the grass growing—look at the eyes that love you, as they gaze back into your own eyes!"

He had risen, and was speaking standing up. The old gentleman was looking at him now in unconcealed alarm. Lizabetha Prokofievna wrung her hands.

"Oh, my God!" she cried. She had guessed the state of the case before anyone else.

Aglaya rushed quickly up to him, and was just in time to receive him in her arms, and to hear with dread and horror, that awful wild cry of the poor unfortunate as he fell writhing to the ground.

There he lay on the carpet; and someone quickly placed a cushion under his head.

No one had expected this.

In a quarter of an hour or so Prince N. and Evgenie Pavlovitch and the old dignitary were hard at work endeavouring to restore the harmony of the evening, but it was of no avail, and very soon after, the guests separated and went their ways.

A great deal of sympathy was expressed; a good deal of

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lamentation was indulged in; a considerable amount of opinion and advice was volunteered; Ivan Petrovitch expressed his opinion that the young man was a Slavophil, or something of that sort; but that it was not a dangerous development.

The old dignitary said nothing.

True enough, some of the guests, next day or the day after, were not in very good humour. Ivan Petrovitch was a little angry, among others, but not seriously so. General Epanchin's chief was a little cool towards his "sub" for some while after the occurrence. The old dignitary took the opportunity of saying something edifying to his protégé—the general,—and added in a flattering way that he was most interested in Aglaya's destiny. He was a man who really did possess a kind heart, although his interest in the prince, in the earlier part of the evening, was due, among other reasons, to the fact of the prince's connection with Nastasia Philipovna's story, according to popular report. He had heard a good deal of this story here and there, and was greatly interested in it, so much so that he longed to ask further questions about it.

Princess Bielokonski, as she drove away on this eventful evening, took occasion to say to Lizabetha Prokofievna:

"Well—he's a good match—and a bad one; and if you want to hear my opinion it is more bad than good. You can see for yourself the man is an invalid."

Lizabetha therefore decided that the prince was impossible as a husband for Aglaya; and during the ensuing night she made a mental vow that never while she lived should he marry Aglaya. With this resolve firmly impressed upon her mind, she awoke next day; but during the morning, after her early lunch, she fell into a condition of remarkable inconsistency with herself.

In reply to a very guarded question of her sisters, Aglaya had answered coldly, but exceedingly haughtily:

"I have never given him my word at all, nor have I ever counted him as my future husband—never in my life. He is just as much an outsider to me as all the rest are."

Lizabetha Prokofievna suddenly flushed up.

"I did not expect that of you, Aglaya," she said, sadly; "he is an impossible husband for you,—I know it: and thank God that circumstances have made this fact clear; but I did not expect to hear such words from you. I thought I should hear a very different tone from you. I should have turned out every one of the men who was in the room last night and kept him, —that's the sort of man he is, in my opinion."

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Here she suddenly paused, afraid of what she had just said. But she little knew how unfair she was to her daughter at that moment.

It was all settled in Aglaya's mind, and she was only waiting for the proper moment to bring the matter to a final climax; and every hint, every careless probing of her painful wound, did but further lacerate her hurt.

VIII.

THIS same morning dawned for the prince pregnant with no less painful presentiments,—which fact his physical attack was of course quite enough to account for; but he was so indefinably melancholy,—his sadness could not attach itself to anything in particular, and this tormented him more than anything else. Of course certain facts stood before him, clear and weighty, but his sadness went beyond all that he could remember or imagine; he realised that he was powerless to console himself unaided. Little by little he began to develop the expectation that this day something more than important,—something decisive was to happen to him.

His attack of yesterday had been a light one. Excepting some little heaviness in the head and pain in the limbs, he did not feel any particular effects. His brain worked all right, though his soul was heavy within him.

He rose late, and immediately upon waking remembered all about the previous evening; he also remembered, though not quite so clearly, how, half an hour after his fit, he had been carried home.

He soon heard that a messenger from the Epanchins' had already been to inquire after him.

At half past eleven another one arrived; and this circumstance pleased him much.

Vera Lebedeff was one of the first to come to see him and offer her services. No sooner did she catch sight of him than she burst into tears; but when he tried to soothe her she had a laughing fit.

The girl's strong sympathy for him struck him very forcibly; he seized her hand and kissed it. Vera flushed up.

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"Oh, don't, don't!" she exclaimed in alarm, snatching her hand quickly away.

She went hastily out of the room in a state of strange confusion.

Lebedeff also came in to see the prince, in a great hurry to get away to the "dead man," as he called General Ivolgin, who was alive still, but very bad. Colia also turned up, and begged the prince for pity's sake to tell him all he knew about his father which had been concealed from him till now. He said he had found out nearly everything since yesterday; the poor boy was in a state of deep affliction. With all the sympathy which he could bring into play, the prince told Colia the whole story without reserve, detailing all the facts as clearly as he could; the tale struck Colia with lightning force. He could not speak. He listened silently, and cried softly to himself the while. The prince perceived that this was an impression which would last out the boy's life. He made haste to explain his view of the matter, and pointed out that the old man's approaching death was probably brought on by the horror which the thought of his crime had awakened in his soul; and that it was not everyone who was capable of so much good feeling.

Colia's eyes flashed as he listened.

"Gania and Varia and Ptitsin are a set of worthless wretches; I shall not quarrel with them; but from this moment our feet shall not travel the same road. Oh, prince, I have felt much that is quite new to me since yesterday; this is my lesson: I shall now consider my mother as quite on my hands; though she may be safe and guaranteed her bite and sup with Varia, still meat and drink is not everything."

He jumped up and hurried off, remembering suddenly that he was wanted at his father's bed-side; but before he went out of the room he inquired hastily after the prince's health, and receiving the latter's reply, added:

"Isn't there something else, prince? I heard yesterday, but I have no right to talk about this. If you ever want a true friend and servant—neither you nor I are so *very* happy, are we?—come to me. I won't ask you questions now."

He ran off and left the prince more thoughtful than ever. Everyone seemed to be speaking prophetically, hinting at some misfortune or sorrow to come; they had all looked at him as though they knew something which he did *not* know; what could it be? Lebedeff had asked questions, Colia had hinted, and Véra had shed tears. What was it?

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At last, with a wave of the hand, and a sigh of annoyance, he said to himself that it was nothing but his own cursed sickly suspicion.

His face lighted up with joy when, at about two o'clock, he espied the Epanchins coming along to pay him a short visit, "just for a minute." They really had only come for a minute.

Lizabetha Prokofievna had announced, directly after lunch, that they would all take a walk and all go together; the information was given in the form of a command, without explanation, drily and abruptly.

All had issued forth in obedience to the maternal mandates, that is, the girls, mamma, and Prince S.

Lizabetha Prokofievna went off in a direction exactly contrary to the usual one, when the object was "a walk."

All understood very well what mamma was driving at, but held their peace, fearing to irritate the good old lady; while the latter, as though anxious to avoid any conversation, pushed on ahead silent and alone.

At last Adelaida broke the silence by remarking that it was no use racing along at such a pace, and that she could not keep up with her mother.

"Look here," said Lizabetha Prokofievna, turning round suddenly; "we are passing his house. Whatever Aglaya may think of it, and in spite of anything that may have happened, he is *not* a stranger to us; besides which, he is ill and fallen into misfortune; I, for one, shall call in and see him at all events; let any one follow me who will."

Of course everyone of them followed her.

The prince hastened to apologize, in correct form, for yesterday's mishap with the vase, and for the scandal generally.

"Oh, that's nothing," replied Lizabetha; "I'm not sorry for the vase, I'm sorry for you. H'm! so you can see that was a 'scandal,' can you? well, it doesn't matter much, for everyone must realize now that it is impossible to expect much of you. Well, *au revoir*, I advise you to have a walk and then go to sleep again if you can. Come in as usual if you feel inclined; and be assured, once for all, whatever happens, and whatever may have happened, you shall always remain the friend of the family as you are now; *mine*, at all events. I can answer for myself, of course."

In response to this challenge all the others chimed in and re-echoed mamma's sentiments.

And so they all took their departure; but in this hasty and kindly designed visit there was hidden a fund of cruelty which

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good old Lizabetha Prokofievna never dreamed of. In the words "as usual," and again in her added, "*mine*, at all events," there was presentiment, the knell of some evil to come.

The prince betook him to think of Aglaya; she had certainly given him a wonderful smile, both at coming and again at leave-taking, but had not said a word, not even when the others all professed their personal friendship towards him; she had twice gazed very intently at him, but that was all. Her face had been paler than usual; she looked as though she had slept badly at night.

The prince made up his mind that he would make a point of going there "as usual," to-night, and kept a feverish look-out upon his watch.

Vera came in three minutes after the Epanchin visitors had left.

"Lef Nicolaievitch," she said, "Aglaya Ivanovna has just given me a little message to make over to you."

The prince trembled.

"Is it a note?"

"No, a verbal message; she had hardly a second of time even for that. She begs you earnestly not to go out of the house for a single moment all to-day, until seven o'clock in the evening; it may have been *nine*, I didn't quite hear."

"But—but, why is this? what does it mean?"

"I don't know at all; but she said I was to tell you particularly."

"Did she say that?"

"Not those very words; she only just had time to whisper as she went by; but by the way she looked at me I knew it was important; she looked at me in a way that made my heart freeze."

The prince asked a few more questions, and though he learned nothing else, he became now more and more excited.

Left alone he lay down on the sofa and began to think.

"Perhaps," he thought, "someone is to be with them until nine to-night and she is afraid that I may come and make a fool of myself again, in public." So he spent his time longing for evening and looking at his watch. But the clearing up of the mystery came long before the evening, and came in the form of a new riddle. Half-an-hour after the Epanchins had gone, Hippolyte arrived.

The latter came so tired and ill that he entered the balcony in an almost unconscious state, sank into a chair and burst into such a fit of coughing that he could not stop himself. He

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coughed up a quantity of blood. His eyes flashed the while, and the two red spots on his cheeks grew brighter and brighter. The prince murmured something to him, but Hippolyte only signed that he wished to be left alone for a while, and sat silent for some time; at last he came to himself.

"I am off," he said, hoarsely and with difficulty.

"Shall I escort you home?" asked the prince, rising from his seat; he winced as he remembered Aglaya's prohibition against leaving the house.

Hippolyte laughed.

"I don't mean that I am going to leave your house;" he continued with the hoarseness and breathlessness still going on; "on the contrary. I thought it absolutely necessary to come and see you on business; otherwise I should not have troubled you. I am off *there*, you know, and this time I believe, seriously, that I *am* off. It's all over; I did not come here for sympathy, believe me. I lay down this morning at ten o'clock with the intention of never rising more before *that* time; but I thought it over and rose just once more in order to come here; from which you may deduce that I had some reason for wishing to come."

"It grieves me to see you so, Hippolyte; why didn't you send me a message?—I would have come up and saved you this trouble."

"Well, well! enough! you've pitied me, and that's all that good company manners exact; I forgot, how are *you?*"

"I'm all right; yesterday I was a little—"

"I know, I heard; the china vase caught it. I'm sorry I wasn't there. I've come on business. In the first place I had the pleasure of seeing Gavrila Ardalionovitch and Aglaya Ivanovna enjoying a *rendezvous* on the green bench in the park. I was astonished to see what a fool a man can look; I remarked upon the fact to Aglaya Ivanovna when he had gone. I don't think anything ever surprises you, prince!" added Hippolyte, gazing incredulously at the prince's calm demeanour, "to be astonished by nothing is a sign, they say, of a great intellect. In my opinion it would serve equally well as a sign of great foolishness; I am not hinting about you, pardon me. I am very unfortunate to-day in my expressions."

"I knew yesterday that Gavrila Ardalionovitch—" began the prince, and paused in evident confusion, though Hippolyte had shown annoyance a moment before at his betraying no surprise.

"You knew it? come, that's news. And, but, no, perhaps better not tell me; and were you a witness of the meeting?"

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"If you were there yourself you must have known that I was *not* there!"

"Oh! but you may have been sitting behind the bushes somewhere. However, I am very glad, on your account, of course; I was beginning to be afraid that Mr. Gania might have the preference."

"May I ask you, Hippolyte, not to talk of this subject; and further, not to use such expressions as the last."

"Especially as you know all, eh?"

"You are wrong. I know scarcely anything, and Aglaya Ivanovna is aware that I know nothing. I knew nothing whatever about this meeting. You say there was a meeting, very well; let's leave it so—"

"Why, what do you mean? You said you knew, and now suddenly you know nothing, you say 'very well; let's leave it so;' but I say, don't be so confiding, especially as you know nothing. You are confiding simply *because* you know nothing. But do you know what these good people have in their minds' eye; Gania and his sister? Perhaps you are suspicious of that little game? Well, well, I'll drop the subject!" he added, hastily, observing the prince's impatient gesture; "but I've come to you on my own business; I wish to make you a clear explanation of all; what a nuisance it is that one cannot die without explanations, I have made such a quantity of them already; do you wish to hear what I have to say?"

"Yes, please; speak away, I am listening."

"Very well, then I'll change my mind, and begin about Gania. Just fancy to begin with, if you can, that *I*, *too*, was given an appointment at the green bench to-day. However, I won't deceive you; I asked for the appointment, I said I had a secret to disclose. I don't know whether I came there too early, I think I must have; but scarcely had I sat down beside Aglaya Ivanovna than I see Gavrila Ardalionovitch and his sister Varia coming along, arm in arm, just as though they were enjoying a morning walk together.

"Both of them seemed very much astonished, not to say disturbed, to see me; they evidently had not expected the pleasure. Aglaya Ivanovna blushed up, and, believe it or not as you like, was actually a little confused, whether it was merely because I was there, or at seeing Gania, for he is a remarkably good looking fellow, you know; whatever it may have been, she blushed like anything and then she finished up the business in a very funny manner; she jumped up from her seat, bowed back to Gania, smiled to Varia, and suddenly observed: 'I only

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nvited you here in order to express my personal satisfaction and gratitude for all your kind wishes on my behalf, sincere, I am sure; and to state that if I find I can avail myself of your proffered services, believe me—' Here she bowed them out, as it were, and they both marched off again, looking very foolish but trying to look solemn.

"Gania evidently could not make head nor tail of the matter; but Varia understood at once that they must get away as quickly as they could, so she dragged Gania away; she is a great deal cleverer than her brother.

"As for myself, I went there on purpose to talk over a meeting to be held between Aglaya Ivanovna and Nastasia Philipovna."

"And Nastasia Philipovna!" cried the prince.

"Aha! I think you are growing the least little bit less cool, my friend, and are beginning to be a trifle surprised, aren't you? Very glad, I'm sure, that you are not above putting on the feelings of an ordinary man, for once. I'll console you a little now, after your consternation. Now then, see what I get for serving a young and high-souled maiden; this morning I had a box on the ear from the lady!"

"A—a moral one!" asked the prince, unconsciously.

"Yes—not a physical one. I don't suppose anyone—even a woman—would raise a hand against such as me now. Even Gania would hesitate! I did think at one time yesterday, that he would fly at me; I bet anything that I know what you are thinking of just now! you are thinking: 'of course one can't exactly strike the little wretch, but one can suffocate him with a pillow, or spiflicate him with a wet towel when he is asleep! not only one *can*—one *ought* to get rid of him somehow.' I can see in your face that you are thinking that very thought at this very second."

"I never thought of such a thing for a moment," said the prince, with disgust.

"I don't know—I dreamed last night that I was being suffocated with a wet rag by—somebody—come, I'll tell you who it was—fancy—Rogojin! What do you think, *can* a man be suffocated with a wet rag?"

"I don't know."

"I've heard he can. Well, we'll leave that question just now. Why am I a scandalmonger? Why did she call me a scandalmonger? and mind, *after* she had heard every word I had to tell her, and had asked all sorts of questions besides—but such is the way of women.

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"For *her* sake I entered into relations with Rogojin—interesting man! at *her* request I arranged a personal interview between herself and Nastasia Philipovna. Could she have been angry because I hinted that she had snapped up Nastasia Philipovna's 'leavings?' Why I have been impressing that upon her all this while for her own good, two letters have I written her about it, and met her personally this morning; I began straight off to-day about its being humiliating for her. Besides, the word 'leavings' is not my own invention; at all events, they all used it at Gania's, and she used it herself. So why am I a scandal-monger?

"I see—I see you are tremendously amused with my looks, at this moment! probably you are laughing at me in your sleeve, and fitting those silly lines to my case, about

> 'Maybe sad Love upon his sitting smiles,
> And with vain hopes his farewell hour beguiles.'

Ha, ha, ha!"

Hippolyte suddenly burst into a fit of hysterical laughter, which passed into a choking cough.

"Observe," he wheezed through his coughing, "what a fellow Gania is! he talks about Nastasia's 'leavings,' and he himself is most anxious to step into your shoes."

The prince sat silent a long while. His mind was agitated with feelings of dread and horror.

"You spoke of a meeting with Nastasia Philipovna," he said at last, in a low voice.

"Oh—come! surely you must know that there is to be a meeting to-day between Nastasia and Aglaya Ivanovna, and that Nastasia Philipovna has been sent for on purpose, through Rogojin, from St. Petersburg? it has been brought about by invitation of Aglaya Ivanovna and my own efforts, and Nastasia is at this moment with Rogojin, not far from here—in the old place, at Varia Alexeyevna's—that curious friend of hers; and to this questionable friend's house, Aglaya Ivanovna is to proceed for a friendly chat with Nastasia Philipovna, and for the settlement of several problems; they are going to play at arithmetic—didn't you know about it? it's true—word of honour!"

"It's a most improbable story."

"Oh, very well! if it's improbable—it *is*—that's all! and yet—where should you have heard it from? though I must say if a fly crosses the room it's known all over the place here. However, I've warned you, and you may be grateful to me, if you like. Well—*au revoir*—probably in the next world! one more

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thing—don't think that I am telling you all this for your sake—oh, dear, no! do you know that I dedicated my comfession to Aglaya Ivanovna? I did though, and how she took it, ha, ha! oh, no! I am not acting from any high exalted motives, I assure you—it is only my personal annoyance and irritation that prompts me—don't flatter yourself. I don't apologize to you either for my words about 'leavings' and all that, I am atoning for that, you see, by telling you the place and time of the meeting. Goodbye, you had better take your measures, if you are worthy the name of a man! The meeting is fixed for this evening—that's poz anyhow."

Hippolyte walked towards the door, but the prince called him back and he stopped.

"Then you think Aglaya Ivanovna herself intends to go to Nastasia Philipovna's to-night?" he asked, and bright hectic spots started up in his cheeks and on his forehead.

"I don't know absolutely for certain; but in all probability it is so," replied Hippolyte, looking half round.

"Nastasia would hardly go there; they can't meet at Gania's—why, there's a man nearly dead in the house as it is! The general is very bad."

"It's impossible, for this reason alone," continued the prince; "how would she get out if she wished to? you don't know the habits of that house—she *could* not get away alone to Nastasia Philipovna's house; it's all nonsense!"

"Look here, my dear prince, no one jumps out of the window if they can help it; but when there's a fire, the dandiest gentleman and finest lady in the world will skip out in the nimblest way when it's hot inside! When the moment of need comes, and there's nothing else to be done—our fine Miss Aglaya will have to go to Nastasia Philipovna's. Don't they let those young ladies out of the house alone, then?"

"I wasn't speaking of that exactly, I—"

"If you didn't mean that, then she has only to go down the steps and walk off, and she need never come back unless she so chooses. Ships are burned behind one sometimes when one doesn't care to return whence one came. Life need not consist of lunches, and dinners, and Prince S's. It strikes me you take Aglaya Ivanovna for some conventional young lady or boarding school girl; I talked this over with her, and she quite agreed with me. Wait till seven or eight o'clock. In your place I would send someone there to keep a look out, so as to seize the exact moment when she steps out of the house. Send Colia if you like; I'll do the spy

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with pleasure, be assured of it—for you at least—Ha, ha, ha!"

Hippolyte went out.

There was no reason for the prince to set anyone to watch even if he had been capable of such a thing. Aglaya's command that he should stay at home all day seemed almost cleared up, now; perhaps she meant to call for him, herself.

It might be, of course, that she was anxious to make sure of his *not* coming there, and therefore bade him sit at home, it might be that. His head whirled; the whole room seemed to be turning round. He lay down on the sofa, and closed his eyes.

One way or the other the question was to be decided at last—finally—fatally.

Oh, no, the prince did not think of Aglaya as a boarding-school miss, or of a young lady of the conventional type. He had long since felt that she might take some such step as this.

But why did she wish to see Nastasia?

He shivered all over as he lay; he was in high fever again.

No! he did not account her a child. Certain of her looks, certain of her words, of late, had filled him with apprehension. At times it had struck him that she was putting too great a restraint upon herself, and he remembered that he had been alarmed to observe the fact at times.

He had tried, all these days, to drive away the heavy thoughts and impressions that oppressed him; but what was the hidden mystery of that secret soul?

The question had long tormented him, although he implicitly trusted that soul.

And now it was all to be cleared up this very day. It was a dreadful thought. And "that woman" was coming on the stage again.

Why did he always feel as though "that woman" were fated to appear at each critical moment of his life, and tear the thread of his destiny like a bit of rotten string?

That he always *had* felt this he was ready to swear, although he knew he was half delirious at the moment. If he had tried to forget *her*, all this last time, it was simply because he was afraid of her.

Did he love the woman or hate her?

This question he did not once ask himself to-day; his heart was quite pure there! he knew whom he loved.

He was not afraid of the fact of this meeting, nor of its

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strangeness, nor of any reasons there might be for it, unknown to himself; he was afraid of the woman herself, Nastasia Philipovna. He remembered afterwards—some days afterwards—how during all those fevered hours he had passed through, all the while he had seen but *her* eyes, *her* look; he had heard *her* voice, strange words of hers; he remembered the fact that this was so, although he could not recollect much of the details of his thoughts during the delirious period.

He could only just remember, for instance, that Vera brought him some dinner, and that he took it; but whether he rose after dinner, or no, he could not recollect.

He knew that he began to distinguish and recollect events only from that moment when Aglaya had suddenly appeared on the balcony, and he had jumped up from the sofa and gone to the middle of the room to meet her; it was just a quarter past seven then.

Algaya was quite alone, and dressed, hastily apparently, and simply in a light mantle.

Her face was pale as it had been in the morning, and her eyes were ablaze with bright but subdued fire. He had never seen quite the expression which her eyes had at this moment.

She gazed attentively at him for an instant.

"You are quite ready, I observe," she said quickly, and with absolute composure, "dressed, and your hat in your hand; I see somebody has thought fit to warn you of what was coming, and I know who. Hippolyte?"

"Yes, he told me," said the prince, feeling only half alive.

"Come then. You know, I suppose, that you must escort me without fail? You are well enough to go out, aren't you?"

"I am well enough, but is it really possible?—"

He broke off abruptly, and could not add another word. This was his one and final attempt to stop this mad child, and, after he had made it, he followed her himself as though he had no will of his own.

Confused as his thoughts were, he was, nevertheless, capable of realizing the fact that if he did not go with her, she would go there alone, and he *must* go with her at all hazards.

He guessed the strength of her determination; it was not for him to stem this wild outburst.

They walked silently on, and said not a single word all the way. He only noticed that she seemed to know the road very well; and once when he thought it better to go by a certain lane, and remarked to her that it would be more quiet, and

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less public that way, she only said, "It's all the same," and went on.

When they were almost arrived at Daria Alexeyevna's house (it was a large wooden structure of ancient date), a well-dressed lady and a young girl came out of it. Both these ladies took their seats in a carriage, which was waiting at the door, talking and laughing loudly the while, and drove away without appearing to notice the approaching visitors.

No sooner had the carriage driven off than the door opened once more; and Rogojin, who had apparently been awaiting them there, let them in and closed the door after them.

"There is not another soul in the house now excepting our four selves," he said aloud, looking at the prince in a strange way.

Nastasia Philipovna was waiting for them in the first room they went into; she, too, was dressed with absolute simplicity, and all in black.

She rose at their entrance, but did not smile; and did not give her hand even to the prince. Her fixed and anxious gaze continually converged upon Aglaya. Both sat down, at a little distance from one another—Aglaya on the sofa, in the corner of the room, Nastasia at the window. The prince and Rojogin remained standing, and were not invited to sit down.

The prince glanced at Rogojin in perplexity, but the latter only smiled his usual disagreeable leer, and said nothing. The silence continued for some few moments longer.

A sort of malicious expression passed over Nastasia Philipovna's face, of a sudden; her face became obstinate-looking, hard, and full of almost *hatred;* but she did not take her eyes off her visitor for a single moment.

Aglaya was clearly confused, but not frightened. On entering she had merely glanced momentarily at her rival, and since then had sat still, with her eyes on the ground, apparently in thought.

Once or twice she glanced round the room—seemingly accidentally.

A feeling of disgust was visible in her expression; she looked as though she were afraid of contaminating herself in this place.

She mechanically arranged her dress and fidgeted about uncomfortably once, eventually changing her seat to the end of the sofa.

Probably she was unconscious of her own movements; but this very unconsciousness of hers added to the offensiveness of their suggested meaning.

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At length she looked firmly and straight into Nastasia's eyes, and instantly read all there was to read in the angry glare of her rival's expression.

Woman understood woman! Aglaya shuddered.

"You know of course why I requested this meeting?" she said at last, quietly, and pausing twice in the delivery of this very short sentence.

"No—I know nothing about it," said Nastasia, drily and abruptly.

Aglaya blushed. Perhaps it struck her as very strange and impossible that she should really be sitting here in this woman's room and waiting for this woman's reply to her own question.

At the first sound of Nastasia's voice a sort of convulsion ran through Aglaya's frame.

Of course "that woman" observed and took in all the above facts.

"You know well enough, but you are pretending to be ignorant for reasons of your own," said Aglaya, gruffly, with her eyes on the ground.

"Why do you say that?" asked Nastasia Philipovna, smiling slightly.

"You wish to take advantage of my position, now that I am in your house," continued Aglaya, with amusing awkwardness.

"For that position *you* are to blame and not I," said Nastasia, flushing up suddenly. "*I* did not invite *you*, but you—me; and to this moment I am quite ignorant as to why I am thus honoured."

Aglaya raised her head haughtily.

"Hold your tongue!" she said. "I did not come here to fight you with your own weapons."

"Oh! then you did come 'to fight,' I may conclude? Dear me!—and I thought you were cleverer than to—"

They looked at one another in undisguised malice. One of these women was the very one who had written to the other, so lately, such letters as we have seen; and all the affection so lavished then was now dispersed at the very first meeting, and at the very first words—why was this?

And yet it appeared that not one of the four persons assembled in the room considered this circumstance as in any degree strange.

The prince who, up to yesterday, would not have believed that he could even dream of such an impossible scene as this of which he was now an eye-witness, stood and listened and looked on, and felt as though he had long foreseen it all.

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The most fantastic dream that he could have dreamed was thus suddenly metamorphosized into the most vivid reality.

One of these women so despised the other, and so longed to express her contempt for her (perhaps she had only come for that very purpose, as Rogojin said next day), that howsoever fantastical a mind was that of the other woman, howsoever afflicted her spirit, and disturbed her understanding, no preconceived idea or feeling of hers could possibly stand up against that envenomed, deadly contempt—woman's contempt—which her rival brought to bear against her. The prince felt sure that Nastasia would say nothing about the letters herself; but he could judge by her flashing eyes and the expression of her face what the thought of those letters must be costing her at this moment. He would have given half his life to prevent Aglaya from speaking of them. But Aglaya suddenly braced herself up, and seemed to take possession of herself fully and all in an instant.

"You have not quite understood the matter," she said. "I did not come to quarrel with you, though I do not love you. I came to you with my mind made up as to what I had to say to you, and I shall not change my intention although you have thought fit to misunderstand me. So much the worse for you, not for myself! I wished to reply to all you have written to me and to reply personally, because I think that such a course is more convenient. Listen to my reply to all your letters.

"I began to be sorry for Prince Lef Nicolaievitch on the very day I made his acquaintance, and when I heard—afterwards—of all that took place at your house in the evening, I was sorry for him because he was such a simple-minded man, and because he, in the simplicity of his soul, believed that he could be happy with a woman of your character. What I feared actually took place; you could not love him, you tormented his heart, and threw him over. You could not love him because you are too proud—no, not proud, that is an error on my part; but because you are too *vain*—no, not quite that either; too self-loving; you are self-loving to an insane degree; your letters to me are a proof of it.

"You could not love so simple a soul as his, and perhaps in your heart of hearts you even despised him and laughed at him; all you could love was your shame and the perpetual thought that you were disgraced and insulted. If you were less shameful, or had no cause at all for shame, you would be still more unhappy than you now are."

Aglaya brought out these thronging words with great satis-

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faction, words which came from her lips far too hurriedly and impetuously, but which had been prepared and thought out long ago, even before she had ever dreamed of such a thing as the present meeting. She watched with envenomed eagerness the effect of her speech as shown in Nastasia's face, which twitched with agitation as the latter listened.

"You remember," she continued, "he wrote me a letter at that time; he says you know all about that letter and that you even read it? I understand all by means of this letter, and understand it correctly; he has since confirmed it all to me; and it is what I now say to you, word for word.

"After receiving his letter I waited; I guessed that you would soon come back here, because you could never do without Petersburg; you are still too young and lovely to live in the provinces. However, this last is not my own idea," she added, blushing dreadfully; and from this moment the blush never left her cheeks to the very end of her speech.

"When I next saw the prince I began to feel terribly pained and hurt on his account. Do not laugh; if you laugh you are unworthy of understanding what I say."

"Surely you see that I am not laughing," said Nastasia, sadly but severely.

"However, it's all the same to me; laugh or not, just as you please. When I asked him about you he told me that he had long since ceased to love you, that the very recollection of you was a torture to him, but that he was sorry for you; and when he thought of you his heart seemed to be crushed and wounded for ever.

"I ought to tell you that I never in my life met a man anything like him for noble simplicity of mind and for boundless trustworthiness. I guessed after hearing him speak that anyone who liked could deceive him, and that he would immediately forgive any one who did so deceive him; and it was for all this that I loved him—"

Aglaya paused for a moment, as though suddenly brought up in astonishment that she could have said what had just passed her lips, but almost at the same moment a great pride flashed out in her eyes, like a defiant assertion, that it would be entirely the same thing to her if "this woman" laughed in her face for the admission just made.

"I have told you all now, and of course you understand what I wish of you."

"Perhaps I do but tell me yourself," said Nastasia Philipovna, quietly.

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Aglaya flushed up angrily.

"I wished to find out from you," she said, firmly, "by what right you dare to meddle with my feelings for him? by what right you dared write me those letters? By what right do you remind both me and him every day and moment of your life that you love him, after you yourself threw him over and ran away from him with so much offence to him and shame to yourself?"

"I never told either him or you that I loved him!" cried Nastasia Philipovna, forcibly; "and—and I did run away from him—you are right there," she added, scarcely audibly.

"How so? never told either him or me?" cried Aglaya; "and how about your letters? Who asked you to betroth us and to try to persuade me to marry him? Was not that a declaration from you? Why do you intrude yourself upon us in this way? I confess, I thought at first that you were anxious to instil disgust for him in my heart by your meddling, in order that I might throw him over; and it was only afterwards that I guessed how the cat jumped: you simply imagined that you were doing a high action by all your fidgeting about; how could you spare any love for him, when you love your own vanity to such an extent? Why could you not simply go away from here instead of writing me those absurd letters? Why did you not *now* marry that generous-hearted man who loves you so and has done you a great honour in offering you his hand? It is plain enough why; because if you marry Rogojin you lose your grievance; you will have nothing more to quarrel about; you will be receiving too much honour. Evgenie Pavlovitch was saying the other day that you had read too many poems and are too well educated for—your position, that you are too well-read a woman, and too much of a 'fine lady;' add to this your *vanity*, and there you have reason enough—"

"And are you not a fine lady?"

Things had come to this unexpected point too quickly. Unexpected because Nastasia Philipovna, on her way to Pavlofsk, had thought and considered a good deal, and perhaps her thoughts had turned in a mischievous rather than a benevolent direction; but Aglaya had been carried away by her own outburst, just as a rolling stone gathers impetus as it careers down hill, and could not restrain herself in the satisfaction of revenge.

It was strange, Nastasia Philipovna felt, to look at Aglaya as she now appeared; she gazed at her and could hardly believe her eyes and ears for a moment or two.

Was she (Nastasia) really a woman whose head was full of

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poems, as Evgenie Pavlovitch had supposed? or was she simply mad, as the prince had assured Aglaya that she was? at all events, this was a woman who, in spite of her occasionally cynical and audacious manner, was far more refined and trustworthy and sensitive than appeared. There really was a great deal of book learning and private thought hidden away somehow within her; though a great deal of the fantastic was mingled with much that was strong and deep and worthy.

The prince well realized this, and a great sympathy for her expressed itself in his face.

Aglaya observed this, and trembled with hate and anger.

"How dare you behave so to me?" she said, with a haughtiness which was quite indescribable, replying to Nastasia's last remark.

"You must have misunderstood what I said," said Nastasia, in some surprise; "how have I behaved towards you?"

"If you wished to preserve your good name, why did not you throw over your—your 'guardian' Totski, without all that theatrical posturing and nonsense?" said Aglaya, suddenly, without rhyme or reason.

"What do you know of my position, that you dare to judge me?" cried Nastasia, quivering with rage, and growing terribly white.

"I know this much, that you did not go out to honest work, but went away with the rich man Rogojin in order to pose as a fallen angel afterwards. I don't wonder that Totski was nearly driven to suicide by such an amiable fallen angel."

"Silence," cried Nastasia Philipovna, writhing; "you are about as fit to understand me as the housemaid is; she would understand me better than you do."

"Probably an honest girl living by her own toil; why do you speak of the housemaid so contemptuously?"

"I do not despise toil; I despise you when you speak of toil."

"If you had cared to be an honest woman you would have gone out as a laundress."

Both had risen from their places and glared at one another with deadly pallid faces.

"Aglaya, don't! all this is quite unfair," cried the prince, in utter despair.

Rogojin was not smiling now: he sat and listened with folded hands, and lips tight compressed.

"There, look at her," cried Nastasia, quivering all over with passion. "Look at this young lady. And I imagined her an

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angel. Did you come to me without your governess, Aglaya Ivanovna? Oh, fie, now shall I just tell you why you came here to-day? shall I tell you without any embellishments? You came because you were afraid of me, there."

"Afraid of *you?*" asked Aglaya, beside herself with naive amazement that the other should dare talk to her like this.

"Yes, me, of course; of course you were afraid of me or you would not have decided to come at all. You cannot despise one you fear. And to think that I have actually *esteemed* you almost up to this very moment! and do you know *why* you are afraid of me? and what is your greatest object at this moment? you wished to satisfy yourself with your own eyes as to which he loves best, myself or you, because you are fearfully jealous."

"He has told me already that he hates you," murmured Aglaya, scarcely audibly.

"Perhaps, perhaps, I am not worthy of him, I know; only I think you are lying all the same. He *cannot* hate me, and he cannot have said so. I am ready to forgive you in consideration of your position; but I confess I thought better of you. I thought you were wiser, and better, too; I did, by heaven I did. Well, take your treasure there. See, he is gazing at you, he can't recollect himself; take him for your own, but on one condition; go away at once, this very instant."

She fell back into a chair, and burst into tears. But suddenly some novel expression blazed out in her eyes; she stared fixedly and obstinately at Aglaya, and rose from her seat.

"Or would you like me to bid him, *bid him*, do you hear? *command him* now at once to throw you up, and remain mine for ever, shall I? he will stay, and he will marry me too, and you shall trot home all alone. Shall I?—shall I say the word!" she screamed like a mad woman, perhaps not quite believing herself that she could really pronounce such wild words.

Aglaya had made for the door in terror, but she stopped at the threshold, as though glued to the spot, and listened. "Shall I turn Rogojin off? Ha! ha! you thought I had married him already for your benefit, did you? Why, I'll call out *now*, if you like in your presence, 'Rogojin, get out!' and say to the prince. 'Do you remember what you promised me?' My goodness, what a fool I have been to humiliate myself before them all this while; why, prince, you yourself gave me your word that you would marry me whatever happened, and would never regret me; you said you loved me and would forgive me all, yes, you even said that. I only ran away from you in order

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to leave you free, and now I don't care to let you go again. Why does she treat me so—so shamefully? I am not a woman of the class she means, ask Rogojin there if I am. He'll tell you. I won't let you go again now that she has insulted me, before your very eyes too, and have you turn away from me and lead her away arm in arm. May you be accursed too, because you were the only one I trusted among them all. Go away, Rogojin, I don't want you," she continued, blind with fury and forcing the words out of her chest, with dry lips and distorted features, evidently not believing a single word of her own gibberish but, at the same time, doing her utmost to prolong the moment of self-attempted deception.

The outburst was so terribly violent that the prince thought she would expire then and there.

"There he is!" she yelled again, pointing to the prince and addressing Aglaya. "There he is! and if he does not approach me at once and take *me* and throw you over—then have him for your own—I give him up to you. I don't want him."

Both she and Aglaya stood and waited as though in expectation, and both looked at the prince like two insane women.

But he, perhaps, did not understand the full force of this sally; in fact, it is certain he did not. All he could see was a poor despairing, insane person, the same for whom, as he had said to Aglaya, his "heart was crushed for ever."

He could bear it no longer, and with a look of entreaty mingled with reproach, he turned and addressed Aglaya, pointing to Nastasia the while:

"How can you?" he murmured; "she is *so* unfortunate."

But he had no time to say another word before Aglaya's terrible look bereft him of speech. In that look was embodied so dreadful a suffering or so deadly a hatred that he gave a cry, wrung his hands, and flew to her; but it was too late.

She had not held out long enough to witness his agitated movement in her direction; she had hidden her face in her hands, cried once "Oh, my God!" and rushed out of the room.

Rogojin followed her in order to undo the bolts of the door and let her out into the street.

The prince made a rush after her, but he was caught and held back at the door. The distorted, livid face of Nastasia gazed at him reproachfully, and her blue lips whispered:

"What? would you go to her—to her?"

She fell senseless into his arms.

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He raised her, carried her into the room, placed her in an arm-chair, and stood over her in stupified expectation. On the table stood a tumbler of water. Rogojin, who had returned, took this and sprinkled a little water in her face. She opened her eyes, but for a moment or two she understood nothing.

Suddenly she looked around, shuddered, gave a loud cry and rushed to the prince:

"Mine, mine," she cried. "Has the proud young lady gone? Ha, ha, ha," she laughed hysterically. "And I had given him over to this proud missy. Why—why did I? Mad —mad! Get away, Rogojin, ha, ha, ha!"

Rogojin stared intently at both of them; then he took his hat, and without a word, left the room.

A few moments later, the prince was seated by Nastasia on the sofa gazing into her eyes and stroking her head and hair, as he would a little child's. He laughed when she laughed, and was ready to cry when she cried. He did not say a word, but listened carefully to her ecstatic and disconnected chatter, hardly understanding a word of it the while, and no sooner did he detect the slightest appearance of complaining, or weeping, or reproaching, than he would smile kindly and quietly and begin stroking her head and cheeks, and soothing and consoling her once more like a tiny child.

IX.

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the events recorded in the last chapter, and the position of the actors in our story had become so changed that it is almost impossible for us to continue the tale without some few special explanations.

And yet we feel that we ought to limit ourselves to the simple record of facts without much attempt at the clearing up of the same for a very patent reason: because we ourselves have the greatest possible difficulty in accounting for the facts to be recorded.

Such a statement on our part may appear most strange to the reader. How is anyone to tell a story which he cannot understand himself?

In order to keep ourselves clear of a false position we had

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perhaps better give an example of what we mean; and probably the intelligent reader will soon see by the example given what the difficulty in our way consists of; more especially are we inclined to take this course since the example shall constitute a distinct march forward of our story, and shall not hinder the progress of the facts remaining to be recorded.

During the next fortnight—that is, through the early part of July, the history of our hero was circulated in the form of strange, diverting, most unlikely-sounding stories, which passed from mouth to mouth, through the streets and houses adjoining those inhabited by Lebedeff, Ptitsin, Nastasia Philipovna and the Epanchins; in fact, pretty well through the town and its environs. All society—both the inhabitants of the place and those who came down of an evening for the music—had got hold of one and the same story, in a thousand varieties of detail—as to how a certain young prince had raised a terrible scandal in a most respectable household, had thrown over a daughter of the said family, being engaged to the young lady; and had been attracted by a woman of shady reputation whom he was determined to marry at once—breaking off all old ties for the satisfaction of his insane idea; and in spite of all the public indignation roused by his action, the marriage was to take place in Pavlofsk openly, and publicly, and the prince had announced his intention of going through with it with head erect and looking the whole world full in the face.

The story was so hedged about and adorned with nonsense and scandal, and persons of so great eminence and importance were apparently mixed up in it, while, at the same time, the evidence was so circumstantial and clear that it is no wonder the matter gave food for plenty of curiosity and gossip.

According to the reports of the most talented gossip-mongers, the young gentleman concerned was of good family—a prince—fairly rich—weak of intellect, but a democrat and dabbler in the Nihilism of the period, as exposed by Mr. Turgenieff; could hardly talk Russian, and had fallen in love with one of the Miss Epanchins. His suit met with so much encouragement that he had been received in the house as the recognised bridegroom-to-be of the young lady. But like the Frenchman of whom the story is told that he studied for holy orders, took all the oaths, was ordained priest and all, and next morning wrote to his bishop informing him that, as he did not believe in God and considered it wrong to deceive the people and live upon their pockets, he begged to surrender the

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orders conferred upon him the day before, and to inform his lordship that he would send this letter to the public press,—like this Frenchman the prince played a false game with the young lady, his affianced.

It was rumoured that he had purposely waited for the solemn occasion of a large evening party at the house of his future bride, at which he was introduced to several eminent persons, in order to publicly make known his ideas and opinions and thereby insult the "big wigs," and to throw over his bride as publicly and offensively as possible; and that, resisting the servants who were told off to turn him out of the house, he had seized and thrown down a magnificent china vase.

As a characteristic addition to the above, it was currently reported that the young prince really loved the lady to whom he was engaged, and had thrown her over out of purely Nihilistic motives, and in the full intention of giving himself the satisfaction of marrying a fallen woman in the face of all the world, thereby publishing his opinion that there is no such distinction as respectable and disreputable among women; and that there exists but one woman—the free and irresponsible.

It was declared that he believed in no classes or anything else, excepting "the woman's question."

All this looked likely enough, and was accepted as fact by most of the inhabitants of the place, especially as it was all borne out more or less by daily circumstances.

Of course much was said that could not be determined absolutely; for instance, it was reported that the poor girl had so loved her future husband that she had followed him to the house of the other woman, the day after she had been thrown over; others said that he had insisted on her coming, himself, in order to shame and insult her by his taunts and Nihilistic confessions when she reached the house.

Howsoever all these things might be, the public interest in the matter grew daily, especially as it became clearer that the scandalous wedding was really and undoubtedly arranged to come off.

So that if our readers were to ask an explanation of us, not of the wild reports of the prince's Nihilistic opinions, but simply as to how such a wedding as that mentioned above as imminent could possibly satisfy the *real* aspirations of the prince; or as to the mental condition of our hero at this time, we confess that we should have great difficulty in giving the required information.

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All we know is, that the wedding really was arranged, and that the prince had commissioned Lebedeff and Keller to look after all the necessary business connected with it—both in church and household; that he had requested them to spare no expense; that Nastasia herself was hurrying on the wedding; that Keller was to be the prince's best man, at his own earnest request; and that Burdofsky was to give Nastasia away, to his great delight. The wedding was to take place before the middle of July.

But besides the above, we are cognizant of certain other undoubted facts which puzzle us a good deal because they seem flatly to contradict the foregoing.

We suspect, for instance, that having commissioned Lebedeff and the others, as above, the prince forgot all about both master of ceremonies and even the ceremony itself the same day; and we feel quite certain that in making all these arrangements he did so in order that he might absolutely escape all thought of the wedding and even forget its approach if he could, by detailing all business concerning it to others.

What did he think of all this time then? What did he wish for—long for?

There is no doubt that the prince was a perfectly free agent all through,—and that as far as Nastasia was concerned, there was no force of any kind exercised upon him. Nastasia wished for a speedy marriage, true!—but the prince agreed at once to her proposals,—he agreed in fact so easily that anyone might suppose he was but acceding to the most simple and ordinary suggestion.

There are many strange circumstances such as this before us; but in our opinion they do but deepen the mystery and do not in the smallest degree help us to understand the case in point.

However, let us examine one more example.

Well then,—we know for a fact that during the whole of this fortnight the prince spent all his days and evenings with Nastasia; he walked with her, drove to the music with her; he began to be restless whenever he passed an hour without seeing her—in fact, to all appearances, he sincerely loved her. He would listen to her for hours at a time with a quiet smile on his face, scarcely saying a word himself. And yet we know equally certainly that during this period he several times set off, suddenly, to the Epanchins', not concealing the fact from Nastasia Philipovna, and driving the latter to absolute despair. We know also that he was not received at the Epanchins' so long as they remained at Pavlofsk, and that he was not allowed

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an interview with Aglaya ;—but that next day he had set off once more on the same errand, apparently quite oblivious of the fact of yesterday's visit having been a failure,—and of course receiving another refusal. We know, too, that exactly an hour after Aglaya had fled from Nastasia Philipovna's house on that fateful evening—the prince was at the Epanchins',—and that his appearance there had been the cause of the greatest consternation and dismay; for Aglaya had not been home, and the family only discovered then, for the first time, that Aglaya and he had been to Nastasia's house together.

It was said that Lizabetha Prokofievna and her daughters had there and then denounced the prince in the strongest terms, and had refused any further acquaintance and friendship with him ;—their rage and denunciations being redoubled when Varia Ardalionovna suddenly arrived and stated that Aglaya had been at her house in a terrible state of mind for the last hour, and that she refused to come home.

This last item of news made a painful impression upon Lizabetha Prokofievna, and it was true.

On leaving Nastasia's, Aglaya had felt that she would rather die than face her home people now, and had therefore gone straight to Nina Alexandrovna.

On receiving the news, both Lizabetha and her daughters and the general all rushed off to Aglaya, followed by Prince Lef Nicolaievitch—undeterred by his reception at the Epanchins' ; but by Varia's interference he was refused a sight of Aglaya here also. The end of the episode was that when Aglaya saw her mother and sisters crying over her and not uttering a word of reproach—she had flung herself into their arms and went straight home with them.

It was said that Gania managed to make a fool of himself even on this occasion; for, finding himself alone with Aglaya for a minute or two when she arrived at his mother's house, and before his mother came in,—he had thought it a fitting opportunity to make a declaration of his own love, and that on hearing this Aglaya, in spite of her dreadful state of mind at the time, had suddenly burst out laughing, and had put a strange question to him. She asked him whether he would consent to hold his finger to a lighted candle in proof of his devotion? Gania—it was said,—looked so comically lost and bewildered, that Aglaya had burst out laughing again and rushed out of the room and upstairs,—where her parents had found her.

Hippolyte told the prince this last story, sending for him on purpose to make it over to him. When the prince heard about

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the candle and Gania's finger he had laughed so that he had quite astonished Hippolyte,—and then shuddered and burst into tears. The prince's condition all those days was strange and perturbed. Hippolyte plainly declared that he thought the prince was out of his mind;—this, however, was hardly evidence to be relied upon.

Offering all these facts to our readers and refusing to explain them, we do not for a moment desire to justify our hero's conduct.

On the contrary, we are quite prepared to feel our share of the indignation which his behaviour aroused in the hearts of his best friends.

Even Vera Lebedeff was angry with him for a while, so was Colia,—so was Keller, until he was selected for best man,—so was Lebedeff himself,—who began to intrigue against him out of pure irritation;—but of this anon.

In fact we are in full accord with certain powerful words spoken to the prince by Evgenie Pavlovitch, quite unceremoniously, during the course of a friendly conversation, six or seven days after the events at Nastasia Philipovna's house.

We may remark here that not only the Epanchins themselves, but all who had anything to do with them, thought it right to cut the prince in consequence of his conduct. Prince S. even went so far as to turn away when he met the prince, and cut him dead in the streets.

But Evgenie Pavlovitch was not afraid to compromise himself by paying the prince a visit, and did so, in spite of the fact that he had re-commenced to visit at the Epanchins, every day of his life;—in fact, the good people seemed to receive him with redoubled hospitality and kindness after their temporary estrangement.

Evgenie called upon the prince the day after that on which the Epanchins all left Pavlofsk. He knew of all the current rumours when he went,—in fact he had probably contributed to them himself.

The prince was delighted to see him, and immediately began to speak of the Epanchins;—which simple and straightforward commencement on the part of the prince quite took Evgenie's fancy, so that he melted at once, and plunged *in medias res* without ceremony.

The prince did not know, up to this, that the Epanchins had left the place. He grew very pale on hearing the news; but a moment after he nodded his head, and said thoughtfully:

"I know it is all right;" a moment later he added quickly:

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"Where have they gone to?"

Evgenie meanwhile observed him attentively, and the rapidity of the questions, the simplicity of the prince's answer, his candour, and at the same time, his evident perplexity and mental agitation surprised him considerably. However, he told the prince all he could, kindly and slowly. The prince hardly knew anything, for this was the first informant from that household whom he had met since the estrangement.

Evgenie reported that Aglaya had been really ill, and that for two nights she had not slept at all, owing to high fever; that now she was better and out of serious danger, but still in a nervous hysterical state.

"It's a good thing that there is peace in the house at all events," he continued; "they never utter a hint about the past, not only in Aglaya's presence but even among themselves. The old people are talking of a trip abroad in autumn, immediately after Adelaida's wedding; Aglaya received the news in silence."

Evgenie himself was very likely going abroad also; so was Prince S. very probably, after the wedding, he and his wife, if affairs allowed of it; the general was to stay at home. They were all at their estate now, about twenty miles or so from St. Petersburg. Princess Bielokonski had not returned to Moscow yet, and was apparently staying in Petersburg, for reasons of her own.

Lizabetha Prokofievna had insisted that it was quite impossible to remain in Pavlofsk after what had happened. Evgenie had told her of all the rumours current in town about the affair; so that there could be no talk of their going to their house on the Yelagin as yet.

"And in point of fact, prince," added Evgenie Pavlovitch, "you must allow that they could hardly have stayed here considering that they knew of all that went on at your place, and in the face of your daily visits to their house, visits which you insisted upon making in spite of their refusal to see you."

"Yes—yes, quite so; you are quite right, I wished to see Aglaya, you know!" said the prince, nodding his head.

"Oh, my dear fellow," cried Evgenie, with animation, and with real sorrow in his voice, "how *could* you permit all that to come about as it has?

"Of course, of course, I know it was all so unexpected for you, I admit that you, only naturally, lost your head, and—and could not stop an insane little woman; that was not in your power, I quite see so much; but you really should have

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realized how seriously she was devoted to you. She could not bear to *divide* you with another, and, and you could bring yourself to throw away and annihilate such a treasure! oh, prince, prince."

"Yes, yes, you are quite right again," said the poor prince, in anguish of mind; "I was wrong I know, and, do you know? it was only Aglaya who looked at Nastasia Philipovna so; no one else did, you know."

"But that's just the worst of it all, don't you see, that there was absolutely nothing serious about the matter in reality," cried Evgenie, beside himself; "excuse me, prince, but I have thought over all this; I have thought a great deal over it; I know all that had happened before; I know all that took place six months since, all; and I know there was *nothing* serious about the matter, it was but fancy, smoke, fantasy, distorted by agitation, and only the alarmed jealousy of an absolutely inexperienced girl could possibly have mistaken the poor woman's flighty, self-imaginings for serious reality."

Here Evgenie Pavlovitch quite shook himself free of all ceremony and gave the reins to his indignation.

Clearly and sensibly he opened out before the prince's imagination the picture of all the latter's present and previous relations with Nastasia Philipovna.

Evgenie Pavlovitch always had "the gift of the gab," but on this occasion his eloquence surprised itself. "From the very beginning," he said, "you began with a lie; what began with a lie was bound to end with a lie, such is the law of nature. I do not agree, in fact I am angry—when I hear you called an idiot; you are far too intelligent to deserve such an epithet; but you are so far *strange* as to be unlike others; that you must allow, yourself. Now, I have come to the conclusion that the basis of all that has happened, has been first of all your innate inexperience (remark the expression 'innate,' prince). Then follows your unheard-of simplicity of heart; then comes your absolute want of sense of proportion (to this want you have several times confessed, yourself); and lastly—a mass, an accumulation, of convictions which you, in your unexampled honesty of soul, accept unquestioningly as also innate and natural, and true, and which you therefore do not transgress. Admit, prince, that in your relations with Nastasia Philipovna there has existed, from the very first, something democratic, the witchery, so to speak, of the woman's question? I know all about that scandalous scene at Nastasia Philipovna's house when Rogojin brought the money in, six months ago. I'll show you

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yourself as in a looking-glass, if you like, and all that went on then, in every detail, and why things have since turned out as they have. You thirsted, while in Switzerland, for your home and country, for Russia; you read, doubtless, many books about Russia, excellent books, I daresay, but hurtful to *you*; and you arrived here, as it were, oppressed with the longing for activity. Then on the very day of your arrival, they tell you a sad story of an ill-used woman, they tell *you*, the knight, pure and without reproach, this tale of the poor woman! The same day you actually *see* this woman; you are attracted by her beauty, her fantastic almost demoniacal beauty (I admit her beauty).

"Add to all this your nervous nature, your epilepsy, and your sudden arrival in the strange town, the day of meetings and of exciting scenes—the day of unexpected acquaintanceships, the day of sudden actions, the day of meeting with the three lovely Epanchin girls, and among them Aglaya—add your fatigue, your mental agitation; add Nastasia's evening party and the tone of that party, and—what were you to expect of yourself at such a moment as that?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" began the prince, once more, nodding his head, and blushing slightly, "yes, it was so, or nearly so—I know it. And besides, you see, I had not slept much the night before, in the railway carriage, or the night before that, either, and I was very much unnerved."

"Of course, of course, quite so; that's what I am driving at," continued Evgenie, excitedly; "it is as clear as possible, and most comprehensible, that you, in the ecstacy of your intoxication, plunged head first into the first chance that came of publicly airing your great idea that you, a prince of rank and an honest man, did not consider a dishonoured woman to be disgraced if the sin were not her own, but that of a disgusting social libertine! Oh, heavens! it's comprehensible enough, my dear prince, but that is not the question, unfortunately; the question is, was there any reality and truth in your feelings? Was it nature, or nothing but intellectual ecstasy? What do you think yourself? We are old in church, of course, that a far worse woman was *forgiven*, but we don't find that she was told that she had done well, or that she was worthy of honour and respect! Did not your common sense show you what was the real state of the case a few months later? The question is now, not whether she is an innocent woman (I do not insist one way or the other—I do not wish to); but can her whole

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career justify such intolerable pride—such impudent egotism as she has shown? Forgive me, I am too violent, perhaps, but—"

"Yes—I daresay it is all as you say; I daresay you are quite right," muttered the prince once more; "she is very sensitive and easily put out, of course; but I daresay you—"

"Agree that she is worthy of sympathy? eh? is that what you wished to say, my good fellow? But then for the mere sake of her own satisfaction and in vindication of her own worthiness of sympathy, she should not have insulted and offended a noble and generous girl by such words as she used, and by such terrible looks of hate as she rained upon her!

"Why, you cannot sympathise here? this is a terrible exaggeration of sympathy, my dear sir. Again, how can you love a girl and yet so humiliate her before a rival as to throw her over for the sake of another woman, before the very eyes of that other woman, when you have already made her a formal proposal of marriage? And you *did* propose to her, you know; you did so before her parents and sisters. Can you be an honest man, prince, if you act so? I ask you! And did you not deceive a good and virtuous maiden in assuring her of your love?"

"Yes, you are quite right; oh! I feel that I am very guilty!" said the prince, in anguish.

"But as if that is enough, my good fellow!" cried Evgenie, indignantly, "as if it is enough simply to blubber out: 'I know I am very guilty;' you are to blame, and yet you persevere in evil doing. Where was your heart, I should like to know, your *christian heart* all that time? Did she look as though she were suffering less, at that moment? you saw her face, you know—was she suffering less than the other woman, do you suppose? How could you see her suffering and allow it to develop and increase and continue, eh?"

"But *I* did not allow it—I did not allow anything," murmured the wretched prince.

"How—what do you mean you didn't allow?"

"Upon my word, I didn't! To this moment I don't know how it all happened. I—I ran after Aglaya Ivanovna with the others, but Nastasia Philipovna fell down in a faint, and since that day they won't let me see Aglaya—that's all I know."

"It's all the same; you ought to have run after Aglaya though the other was fainting."

"Oh, but I couldn't! She would have died—she would have killed herself, you don't know her; and I should have told Aglaya, you know, and it—but I see, Evgenie Pavlovitch,

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you don't know all. Tell me now, why am I not allowed to see Aglaya? I should have cleared it all up, you know. They neither of them kept to the real point, you see—I could never explain what I mean to you, but I think I could to Aglaya. Oh! my God, my God! you spoke just now of Aglaya's face at the moment when she ran away. Oh, my God! I remember it! Come along, come along—quick!" He pulled at Evgenie's coat sleeve nervously and excitedly, and rose from his place.

"Where to?"

"Come to Aglaya—quick, quick!"

"But I told you she is not at Pavlofsk. And what would be the use if she were?"

"Oh, she'll understand, she'll understand!" pleaded the prince, putting his two hands into a supplicating attitude. "She would understand that all this is not the point—not a bit the real point—it is quite foreign to the real question."

"How can it be foreign? You *are* going to be married, are you not? Very well, then you are persisting in your course as then taken. *Are* you going to marry her or not?"

"Yes, I shall marry her—yes."

"Then why is it 'not the point?'"

"Oh, no, it is not the point, not a bit; it's all the same, my marrying her—it means nothing."

"How 'means nothing?' You are talking nonsense, my friend. You are marrying the woman you love in order to secure her happiness, and Aglaya sees and knows it. How can you mean that 'it's all the same' or 'not the point?'"

"Her happiness? Oh, no. I am only marrying her—well, because she wished it. It means nothing—it's all the same. She would certainly have died—I see now that that marriage with Rogojin was an insane idea. I understand all now that I did not understand beforehand; and, do you know, when those two stood opposite to one another that night I could not bear Nastasia Philipovna's face; you must know, Evgenie Pavlovitch, I have never told any one before—not even Aglaya—that I *cannot* bear Nastasia Philipovna's face." (He lowered his voice mysteriously as he said this.)

"You described that evening at Nastasia Philipovna's (six months since) very accurately just now; but there is one thing which you did not mention, and of which you took no account, because you do not know; I mean her *face*—I looked on her face, you see. Even in the morning when I gazed at her portrait I felt that I could not bear to look at her expression—now, there's Vera Lebedeff, for instance, her eyes

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are quite different, you know. I'm *afraid* of her face!" he added, with real alarm.

"You are *afraid* of it?"

"Yes—she's mad!" he whispered, growing whiter.

"Do you know this for certain?" asked Evgenie, with the greatest curiosity.

"Yes, for certain—quite for certain, now! I have discovered it *absolutely* for certain these last few days."

"What are you doing to yourself, then?" cried Evgenie, in alarm. "You must be marrying her solely out of *fear*, then! I can't make head or tail of it, prince. Perhaps you don't even love her?"

"Oh, no; I love her with all my soul. Why, she is a child. She's a child now—a real, real child. Oh! you know nothing about it at all, I see."

"And are you assured, at the same time, that you love Aglaya too?"

"Yes—yes—oh, yes!"

"How so? Do you want to make out that you love them *both*?"

"Yes—yes—both! I do!"

"Excuse me, prince, but this is mere nonsense. Do recollect yourself."

"Without Aglaya—I—I *must* see Aglaya!—I shall die in my sleep very soon—I thought I was dying in my sleep last night. Oh! if Aglaya only knew all—I mean really, *really* all. Because she must know *all*—that's the first condition towards understanding. Why cannot we ever find out all about another, especially when that other has been guilty of something? But I don't know what I'm talking about—I'm so mixed. You pained me so dreadfully. Surely—surely Aglaya has not the same expression *now* as she had at the moment when she ran away. Oh, yes! I am guilty and I know it—I know it. Probably I am in fault all round—I don't quite know exactly where—but I am in fault, no doubt. There is something else, but I cannot explain it to you, Evgenie Pavlovitch, I have no words, but Aglaya will understand; I have always believed Aglaya will understand—I am assured she will."

"No, prince, she will not. Aglaya loved like a woman, like a human being, not like an abstract spirit. Do you know what, my poor prince? The most probable explanation of the matter is that you never loved either the one or the other in reality."

"I don't know—perhaps you are right in much that you have said, Evgenie Pavlovitch; you are very wise, Evgenie Pavlovitch—

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oh! how my head is beginning to ache again—come to her, quick—for God's sake, come!"

"But I tell you she is not in Pavlofsk! she's in Colmina."

"Oh, come to Colmina then—come—do—come!"

"No—no, impossible!" said Evgenie, rising.

"Look here—I'll write a letter—take a letter for me!"

"No—no, prince; you must forgive me, but I can't undertake any such commissions! I really can't."

And so they parted.

Evgenie Pavlovitch left the house with certain strange convictions. He, too, felt that the prince was a little "off his mind."

"And what did he mean by that *face*—a face which he so fears and yet so loves. And meanwhile he really may die, as he says, without seeing Aglaya, and she will never know how devotedly he loves her! ha, ha, ha! how does the fellow manage to love two of them? two different kinds of love, I suppose, one a-piece! this is very interesting—poor idiot! What on earth will become of him now?"

X.

THE prince did not die before his wedding day—either by day or night, as Evgenie Pavlovitch had foretold that he might. Very probably he may have passed bad nights, and been afflicted with bad dreams; but during the daytime, among his fellow-men, he seemed to be just as good and kind as ever, and even contented; only a little thoughtful when alone.

The wedding was hurried on. The day was fixed for exactly a week after Evgenie's visit to the prince.

In the face of such haste as this, even the prince's best friends (if he had had any) would have felt disenchanted and repelled in their attempt to "save" the poor madman. Rumour said that in the visit of Evgenie Pavlovitch was to be discerned the authority and influence of Lizabetha Prokofievna and her husband.

But if those good souls, in the boundless kindness of their hearts, were desirous of saving the pitiably eccentric young fellow from the abyss, of course they were unable to take any stronger measures to attain that end. Neither their position, nor their private inclination, perhaps (and only naturally, too!) would allow them to use any more pronounced means.

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We have observed before, that even some of the prince's nearest neighbours had begun to oppose him and his plans.

Vera Lebedeff's passive disagreement with him was limited to the shedding of a few solitary tears; to the more frequent sitting alone at home, and to the diminished frequency of her glances in the prince's direction.

Colia was occupied with his father at this time; the old man died during a second stroke, which took place just eight days after the first.

The prince showed great sympathy in the grief of the family, and on the first day of their mourning he was at the house a long while with Nina Alexandrovna; he went to the funeral.

It was observable that the public assembled in church, greeted the prince's arrival and departure with whisperings, and followed him about with their eyes while he was there.

The same thing happened in the park and in the street wherever he went. He was pointed out when he drove by, and he often overheard the name of Nastasia Philipovna coupled with his own as he passed.

The funeral service produced a great effect on the prince. He whispered to Lebedeff while still in church, that this was the first time he had ever heard a Russian funeral service since he was a little boy.

Observing that the prince was looking about him uneasily, Lebedeff asked him whom he was looking for.

"Nothing, I only thought I—"

"Is it Rogojin you are trying to find?"

"Why—is he here?"

"Yes, he's in church."

"I thought I caught sight of his eyes!" muttered the prince, in confusion. "But what of it!—Why is he here? was he asked?"

"Oh, dear, no! Why, they don't even know him! Anyone can come in here, you know. Why do you look so amazed? I often meet him; I've seen him at least four times, here at Pavlofsk, within the last week."

"I haven't seen him once—since that day!" the prince murmured.

As Nastasia Philipovna had not said a word about having met Rogojin "since that day," the prince concluded that the latter had his own reasons for wishing to keep out of sight. All this day of the funeral our hero was in a deeply thoughtful state; Nastasia Philipovna was in a particularly merry humour, both in the day-time and in the evening.

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Nina Alexandrovna and Lebedeff tried to persuade the prince to have the wedding in St. Petersburg, instead of in the public fashion contemplated, down here at Pavlofsk in the height of the season. But the prince only said that Nastasia Philipovna desired to have it so.

The next day Keller appeared, to visit the prince. He was in a high state of delight with the post of honour assigned to him at the wedding.

"But," he said, mysteriously, "that fellow Lebedeff is intriguing against you, prince; he wants to put you under state control —you and your money too! private asylum, you know! he does really—it's the simple truth!"

The prince recollected that somebody had told him something of that before, and he had, of course, scoffed at the idea. He only laughed now, and forgot the hint at once as usual!

Lebedeff really had been busy for some little while; and when he came to the prince—the very day before the wedding—to confess (for he always confessed to the persons against whom he intrigued, especially when the plan failed), he informed our hero that he (himself) was a born Talleyrand, but for some unknown reason had remained simple Lebedeff all his life. He then proceeded to explain his whole game to the prince, interesting the latter exceedingly.

According to Lebedeff's account, he had first tried what he could do with General Epanchin. The latter informed him that he wished well to the unfortunate young fellow, and would gladly do what he could to "save him," but that he did not think it would be proper for him to interfere in this matter. Lizabetha Prokofievna would neither hear nor see Lebedeff. Prince S. and Evgenie Pavlovitch only shrugged their shoulders, and expressed by the gestures of their hands that it was no business of theirs.

However, Lebedeff had not lost heart, and went off to a clever lawyer,—an old and respectable man, whom he knew well.

This old gentleman informed him that the thing was perfectly feasible if he could get hold of witnesses (competent, of course) to his mental incapacity; then, with the protection of a few influential persons, he would soon see the matter arranged.

Lebedeff immediately procured the services of his old doctor, and carried the latter away to Pavlofsk, in order to see the prince, by way of viewing the ground, as it were, and to give him (Lebedeff) friendly counsel as to whether the thing was to be done or not; the visit was not to be official but preparatory.

The prince remembered the doctor's visit quite well.

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Lebedeff had said that he looked ill, and had better see a doctor; and although the prince scouted the idea, Lebedeff had turned up almost immediately with his old friend,—explaining that they had just met at the bedside of Hippolyte, who was very bad, and that the doctor had something to tell the prince about the sick man.

The prince had, of course, at once received the doctor, and had plunged straight into a conversation about Hippolyte. He had then given the doctor an account of Hippolyte's attempted suicide; and had proceeded thereafter to talk of his own malady, —of Switzerland, of Schneider, and so on; and so deeply was the old man interested by the prince's conversation and explanation of Schneider's system, that he sat on for two hours, smoking the prince's cigars, and altogether in a condition of Elysian comfort and happiness.

They had parted great friends; and the doctor informed Lebedeff as he came out, that if all people like the prince were to be put under restraint, there would be no one left for keepers.

Lebedeff finished his discourse by declaring that henceforth the prince should see nothing but devotion of life and blood in his cause, on the part of Lebedeff, and that "he had come to say so."

Hippolyte, too, was a source of some diversion to the prince at this time; he would send for our hero at any and every hour of the day. They lived,—Hippolyte and his mother and the children,—in a small house not far off. The prince had enough to do in keeping the peace between the irritable Hippolyte and his wretched mother, and eventually the former became so malicious and sarcastic on the subject of the prince's approaching wedding, that our hero took offence at last, and refused to continue his visits.

A couple of days later, however, Hippolyte's mother came with tears in her eyes, and begged the prince to come back "or *he* would eat her up bodily." She added that Hippolyte had a great secret to disclose. Of course the prince went; there was no secret whatever, unless we reckon certain pantings and agitated glances around (probably all put on) as the invalid begged his visitor to "beware of Rogojin."

"He is the sort of man," he continued, "who won't give up his own, you know; he is not like you and me, prince—he belongs to quite a different order of beings; if he sets his heart on a thing *he* won't be afraid of *anything* there may be between him and the object desired;" and so on.

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Hippolyte was very ill, and looked as though he could not long survive. He was tearful and peaceful at first, but grew more and more sarcastic and *evil* as the interview proceeded.

The prince questioned him in detail as to his hints about Rogojin; he was anxious to seize upon some *facts* which might confirm Hippolyte's vague warnings; but there was no fact to seize upon, excepting Hippolyte's own private impressions and feelings.

Hippolyte—to his immense satisfaction—ended by seriously alarming the prince.

At first the prince had not cared to make any reply to his sundry questions, and only smiled in response to Hippolyte's advice to "run for his life—abroad if necessary. There are Russian priests everywhere, and one can get married all over the world."

But it was Hippolyte's last idea which upset the prince. The little wretch said:

"What I am really alarmed about, though, is Aglaya Ivanovna. Rogojin knows how you love her. Love for love. You took Nastasia Philipovna from him. He will murder Aglaya Ivanovna; for though she is not yours of course, now, still such an act would pain you,—wouldn't it?"

Hippolyte had attained his end. The prince left the house beside himself with terror.

These warnings about Rogojin were expressed on the day before the wedding. That evening the prince saw Nastasia Philipovna for the last time before they were to meet at the altar; but Nastasia was not in a position to give him any comfort or consolation; on the contrary, she only added to his mental perturbation as the evening went on. Up to this time Nastasia had invariably, at their interviews, done her very best to cheer the prince,—she was afraid of his melancholy appearance; she would try singing to him, but generally told him every sort of funny story or reminiscence that she could recall. The prince nearly always pretended to be amused, whether he were so actually or no; but often enough he laughed loudly and sincerely, delighted with the brilliancy and brightness of her wit and taste, when she was carried away by her narrative, as she very often was.

Nastasia would be wild with joy and ecstasy to see the impression she had made upon the prince, and to observe his laugh of real amusement; and she would remain the whole evening in a state of pride and happiness.

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But this evening her melancholy and thoughtfulness grew with every hour.

The prince had told Evgenie Pavlovitch with perfect sincerity that he loved Nastasia Philipovna with all his soul; but in his love was included the sort of tenderness one feels for a sick child which cannot be left alone by itself to do as it likes. He never spoke of his feelings for Nastasia to anyone, not even to herself. When they were seated talking together, there was nothing in their cheerful, animated conversation which any outsider could not have heard. Daria Alexeyevna, with whom Nastasia was staying, told afterwards how that she had been filled with joy and delight only to look at them, all this last time.

The prince had observed that Nastasia knew well enough what Aglaya was to him. He never spoke of it, but he had seen her face when she had caught him starting off for the Epanchins' house on several occasions. When the Epanchins left Pavlofsk, her face had quite beamed with radiance and happiness.

Unsuspicious and unobservant as the prince was of such things, he had not failed to observe, at that time, that Nastasia seemed to have some scheme in her mind for a scene or scandal which would drive Aglaya out of Pavlofsk. She had encouraged the rumours and excitement among the inhabitants of the place as to her marriage with the prince, in order to annoy her rival; and, finding it difficult to meet the Epanchins anywhere, she had, on one occasion, taken the prince for a drive, and driven past their house. Our hero did not observe what was being done until they were almost passing the very windows, when it was too late to do anything to defeat the plan. As the carriage slowly drove by the house, the prince had been dreadfully agitated, and for two whole days after this he was seriously ill.

Nastasia did not try that particular experiment again. A few days before that fixed for the wedding, she grew wonderfully grave and thoughtful. She always ended by getting the better of her melancholy feeling, and becoming merry and cheerful again, but not quite so unaffectedly happy as she had been a few days earlier.

The prince redoubled his attentive study of her symptoms. It was a most curious circumstance, in his opinion, that she never spoke of Rogojin. But once, about five days before the wedding, when the prince was at home, a messenger arrived, begging him to come at once, for that Nastasia Philipovna was very ill.

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He had found the latter in a condition closely approaching to absolute madness. She screamed, and trembled, and cried out that Rogojin was hiding out there in the garden—that she had seen him herself—and that he would murder her in the night—cut her throat. She was terribly agitated all day.

But it so happened that the prince called in at Hippolyte's house later on, and heard from his mother that she had been in town all day, and had there received a visit from Rogojin, who had made inquiries as to the Pavlofsk folk. On inquiry, it turned out that Rogojin visited the old lady in town at almost the same moment at which Nastasia declared that she had seen him skulking in the garden; so that the whole thing turned out to be a "mirage" on her part. Nastasia immediately went across to Hippolyte's to inquire more accurately of the old lady, and returned immensely relieved and comforted.

On the day before the wedding, the prince left Nastasia in a state of great animation. Her wedding dress and all sorts of finery had just arrived from town. The prince had not imagined that she would be so delighted with the dressmaker's efforts; but he was glad enough to say a word or two of approbation, and this praise rendered her doubly happy.

The fact was, she was laying a deep plot. She wished to look as lovely and as magnificent as possible, because she had an idea that Aglaya, or some one deputed by her, might be in the church during the ceremony, or in the crowd outside, to see how she looked. The prince left her at eleven, full of these thoughts, and went home. But it was not twelve o'clock when a messenger came to say that Nastasia was very bad, and he must come back at once.

On hurrying back he found his bride locked up in her own room and could hear her hysterical cries and sobs from outside; it was some time before she could be made to hear that the prince had come, and then she opened the door only just sufficiently to let him in, and immediately locked it behind him. She then fell on her knees at his feet. (So at least Daria Alexeyevna reported.)

"What am I doing? what am I doing to you?" she sobbed convulsively, embracing his knees.

The prince was a whole hour soothing and comforting her, and left her, at length, pacified and composed. He sent another messenger during the night to inquire after her, and two more next morning. The last brought back a message that Nastasia was surrounded by a whole army of dressmakers and maids,

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and was as happy and as busy as such a lovely woman should be on her wedding morning, and that there was not a vestige of yesterday's agitation remaining. The message concluded with the news that at the moment of the bearer's departure there was a great confabulation in progress as to which diamonds were to be worn, and how.

This message entirely calmed the prince's mind.

The following report of the proceedings on the wedding day may be depended upon, as coming from eye-witnesses:

The wedding was fixed for eight o'clock in the evening.

Nastasia Philipovna was ready at seven. From six o'clock groups of people began to gather at Nastasia's house, at the prince's, and at the church door, but more especially at the former place. The church began to fill at seven.

Colia and Vera Lebedeff were very anxious on the prince's account, but they were so busy over the arrangements for receiving the guests after the wedding, that they had not much time for the indulgence of personal feelings.

There were to be very few guests besides the best men and so on; only Daria Alexeyevna, the Ptitsins, Gania, and the doctor. When the prince asked Lebedeff why he had invited the doctor, who was almost a stranger,—Lebedeff replied:

"Why, my dear sir, he has an 'order' on, it looks so well."

This idea amused the prince.

Keller and Burdofsky looked wonderfully respectable in their dress coats and white kid gloves.

At about half-past seven the prince started off for the church in his carriage.

We may remark that our hero seemed anxious not to omit a single one of the recognised customs and traditions observed at weddings; he wished all to be done as openly as possible, and "as it should be done" in every respect.

Arrived at the church, the prince, under Keller's guidance, passed through the crowd of spectators, amid the continuous whispering and excited exclamations of the "*profanum vulgus*." The prince stayed near the altar, while Keller made off once more to the bride's house, to fetch the bride.

On reaching the gate of Daria Alexeyevna's house, Keller found a far denser crowd than he had encountered at the prince's. The remarks and exclamations of the spectators here were of so irritating a nature that Keller was very near making them a speech on the impropriety of their conduct, but was luckily

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caught by Burdofsky, in the act of turning to address them, and brought in.

Nastasia Philipovna was ready. She rose from her seat, looked into the glass and remarked, as Keller told the tale afterwards, that she was "as pale as a corpse." She then bent her head reverently before the ikon in the corner, and left the room.

A torrent of voices greeted her appearance at the front door. The crowd whistled, clapped its hands, and laughed and shouted; but in a moment or two isolated voices were distinguishable.

"What a lovely woman," cried one.

"Well, she isn't the first pretty girl in the world, nor the last," said another.

"Marriage covers everything," observed a third.

"No, by jove, I defy you to find another beauty like that," said a fourth.

"My word! she's a real princess that. I'd sell my soul for such a princess as that!"

Nastasia came out of the house looking as white as any handkerchief; but her large dark eyes glared at the vulgar crowd like blazing coals; the spectators would not stand it, their cries were redoubled and became more exultant and triumphant every moment. The door of the carriage was open and Keller had given his hand to the bride to help her in, when suddenly with a loud cry she rushed from the door-steps straight for the surging crowd below. Her friends about her were stupified with amazement; the crowd parted as she rushed through it, and suddenly, at a distance of five or six yards from the carriage, appeared Rogojin. It was his look that had caught her eyes in the crowd.

Nastasia rushed to him like a mad woman, and seized both his hands:

"Save me!" she cried, "take me away, anywhere you like, quick!"

Rogojin seized her in his arms and almost carried her to the carriage. Then, in one moment, he caught up his purse out of his pocket, tore out a hundred rouble note and held it to the coachman:

"To the railway, quick! if you catch the train you shall have another like it; quick!"

He leaped into the carriage after Nastasia and banged the door. The coachman did not hesitate a moment; he whipped up the horses.

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"One more second and I should have stopped him," said Keller, afterwards. In fact, he and Burdofsky jumped into another carriage and set off in pursuit; but it struck them as they drove along that it was not much use trying to bring Nastasia back by force.

"Besides," said Burdofsky, "the prince would hardly like to marry her now, would he?" So they gave up the pursuit.

Rogojin and Nastasia Philipovna reached the station just in time for the train. As he jumped out of the carriage and almost as he leaped into the train, Rogojin managed to seize hold of a young girl standing on the platform and wearing an old-fashioned, but respectable-looking, black mantilla and a handkerchief over her head.

"Take fifty roubles for your mantilla?" he shouted, holding the money out to the girl. Before the astonished young woman could collect her scattered senses, Rogojin pushed the money into her hand, seized the mantle off her shoulders, and threw both it and the handkerchief over Nastasia's head and shoulders.

The news of what had happened reached the church with extraordinary rapidity. When Keller arrived, a host of people whom he did not know thronged around to ask him questions. There was much excited talking, and shaking of heads, even some laughter; but no one left the church, all being anxious to observe how the now celebrated bridegroom would take the news.

The latter grew very pale upon hearing it, but took it quite quietly:

"I was afraid," he muttered, scarcely audibly, "but I hardly thought it would come so;" then after a short silence, he added: "However, in her state, it is quite consistent with the general order of things."

Even Keller admitted afterwards that this was extraordinarily philosophical behaviour on the prince's part. Our hero left the church calm and brave, to all appearances, as many witnesses were found to declare afterwards. He seemed to be anxious to reach home and be left alone as quickly as possible; but this was not to be. He was accompanied home by nearly all the invited guests, and besides this, the house was almost besieged by excited bands of people, who insisted upon being allowed to enter the balcony. The prince heard Keller and Lebedeff remonstrating and quarrelling with these unknown individuals, and soon went out himself. He approached the disturbers of his peace, requested courteously to be told what

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was desired; then politely putting Lebedeff and Keller aside, he addressed an old gentleman who was standing on the balcony steps at the head of the band of would-be guests and courteously requested him to do him the honour to walk in. The old fellow was quite taken aback and confused by this behaviour, but entered followed by his friends. Tea was handed round and the conversation was general and decorous, and no allusion was made to the all-absorbing topic, a faint attempt having been at once nipped in the bud. After an hour or so, tea being finished, the guests invited or otherwise began to be ashamed of themselves and gradually dispersed. Expressions of sympathy were now to be heard from the parting visitors,—"Come, come! it's all for the best, I daresay; don't grieve about it," and such like amiable advice.

At last—at about half-past ten o'clock—the prince was left to himself. His head was aching badly. Only Vera Lebedeff was about the house, rearranging the furniture from the holiday to the usual state. As she left the balcony, she glanced at the prince.

He was seated at the table, with both elbows upon it, and his head resting on his hands. She approached him and touched his shoulder gently. The prince started and looked at her in perplexity; he seemed to be collecting his senses for a minute or so before he could remember where he was. As recollection dawned upon him, he became violently agitated. All he did, however, was to ask Vera excitedly to knock at his door and awake him in time for the first train up to Petersburg next morning. Vera promised, and the prince began to entreat her wildly not to tell any one of his intention. She promised this too; and at last, when she had half-closed the door, the prince called her back a third time, took her hands in his, kissed them, then kissed her forehead; and with a very remarkable expression of face, said to her, "*Au revoir* till to-morrow."

Such was Vera's story afterwards.

She went away in great anxiety on the prince's account.

When she saw him in the morning, he seemed to be quite himself again, and greeted her with a smile, and told her that he would very likely be back by the evening. It appears that he did not consider it necessary to inform any one excepting Vera of his departure for town that morning..

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XI.

AN hour later he was in St. Petersburg, and by ten o'clock he had rung the bell at Rogojin's.

He had gone to the front door, and was kept waiting a long while before any one came. At last the door of the lodging opposite (old Mrs. Rogojin's) was opened, and an aged servant appeared.

"Parfen Semionovitch is not at home," she wheezed from out the doorway; "whom do you want?"

"Parfen Semionovitch."

"He is not in."

The old woman examined the prince from head to foot with great curiosity.

"At all events tell me whether he slept at home last night, and whether he came alone?"

The old woman continued to stare at him, but said nothing.

"Was not Nastasia Philipovna here—at this house—with him, yesterday evening?"

"And, pray, who are you yourself?"

"Prince Lef Nicolaievitch Muishkin; he knows me well."

"He is not at home."

"And Nastasia Philipovna?"

"I know nothing about it."

"Stop a minute; when will your master come back?"

"I don't know that either."

The door was shut with these words, and the old woman disappeared.

The prince decided to come back within an hour. Passing out of the house, he met the "dvornik" (yard-porter).

"Is Parfen Semionovitch at home?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Why did they tell me he was not at home, then?"

"Where did they tell you so,—at his door?"

"No, at his mother's lodging; I rang at Parfen Semionovitch's door and nobody came."

"Well, he may have gone out, I can't tell. Sometimes he takes the keys with him and leaves the house empty for two or three days."

"Do you know for certain that he was at home last night?"

"Yes, he was."

"Was Nastasia Philipovna with him?"

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"I don't know, she doesn't often come; I think I should have known if she had come."

The prince went out deep in thought, and walked up and down the pavement for some time. The windows of all the rooms occupied by Rogojin were shut up, those of his mother's apartment were open. It was a fine bright day. The prince crossed the road in order to have a good look up at the windows again; not only were Rogojin's all closed, but the white blinds were all down as well.

He stood so for a minute and then, suddenly, and strangely enough, it seemed to him that a little corner of one of the blinds was lifted, and Rogojin's face appeared for an instant and disappeared at once. He waited another minute and decided to go and ring the bell once more; however, he thought better of it again and put it off for an hour.

The chief object in his mind at this moment was to get to the Ismailofsky barracks as quickly as he could, to Nastasia Philipovna's lodging, which was near them. He remembered that not long since, when she had left Pavlofsk at his request, he had begged her to put up in town at the house of a respectable old lady, whom he knew—who lived and let lodgings near the Ismailofsky barracks. Probably Nastasia had kept the lodging when she came down to Pavlofsk this last time;—and most likely she would have spent the night there, Rogojin having taken her straight thither from the station.

The prince took a droshky. It struck him as he drove on that he ought to have commenced by coming here, since it was most improbable that Rogojin should have taken Nastasia to his own house last night. He remembered too that the dvornik said she very rarely went there at all, so that it was still less likely that she should have gone there so late at night.

Supporting himself with these reflections, the prince reached the Ismailofsky barracks in a dead-alive condition.

To his absolute consternation the good people at the lodgings had not only heard nothing of Nastasia, but all came out to look at the prince as if he were a marvel of some sort. The whole family came, mother, daughter, and grandmother—and the prince was begged to enter. He guessed at once that they knew perfectly well who he was, and that yesterday ought to have been his wedding day; and further that they were dying to ask all about the wedding and especially about the mystery as to why he should be here now, inquiring for the woman who in all reasonable human probability might have been expected to be with him in Pavlofsk.

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He satisfied their curiosity, in as few words as possible, with regard to the wedding.

The exclamations, and sighs, and "ach's" were so numerous and sincere that the prince was obliged to tell the whole story—in a short form of course. The advice of all these agitated ladies was that the prince should go at once and knock at Rogojin's until he was let in: and when let in insist upon a substantial explanation of everything.

If Rogojin was really not at home, the prince was advised to go to a certain house, address of which was given, where lived an old friend of Nastasia Philipovna's; it was possible that she might have spent the night there in her anxiety to keep out of the way of all her friends.

The prince rose from his seat in a condition of mental collapse. The good ladies reported afterwards that "his pallor was terrible to see, and his legs seemed to give way underneath him." With difficulty he was made to understand that his new friends would be glad of his address, in order to act with him if possible. After a moment's thought he gave the address of the small hotel, on the stairs of which he had had a fit some five weeks since. He then set off once more for Rogojin's.

This time they neither opened the door at Rogojin's lodging nor at the lodging opposite. The prince found the yard-porter with the greatest difficulty, and when found the man would hardly look at him or answer his questions; pretending to be busy over some yard work. Eventually, however, he was persuaded to reply so far as to state that Rogojin had left the house early in the morning and gone to Pavlofsk, and that he would not return to-day at all.

"I shall wait, however; he may come back this way."

"He may not be home for a week."

"Then, at all events, he *did* sleep here, did he?"

"Well—he did sleep here, yes."

All this was suspicious and unsatisfactory. Very likely the dvornik had received new instructions during the interval of the prince's absence; his manner was so different now,—he had been so obliging—now he was as obstinate and silent as a mule. However, the prince decided to call again in a couple of hours, and after that to watch the house in case of need. His hope was now that he might yet find Nastasia at the address which he had just received from the old ladies. To that address he now set off, full speed.

But alas! at this new place they did not even appear to

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understand what he was driving at. After a while, by dint of certain hints, he was able to gather that Nastasia must have had a quarrel with her friend two or three weeks ago, since which date the latter had neither heard nor seen anything of her. In fact, this good friend of Nastasia's gave him to understand that the subject of the latter's present whereabouts was not of the slightest interest to her; and that Nastasia might marry all the princes in the world for all *she* cared! so our hero took his leave hurriedly. It struck him now that she might have gone away to Moscow just as she had done the last time, and that Rogojin had perhaps gone after her, perhaps even *with* her. If only he could find some *scent*.

However, he must take his room at the hotel; and he started off in that direction. Having engaged his room, he was asked by the waiter whether he would take dinner; replying in the affirmative, he sat down and waited; but it was not long before it struck him that dining would delay him. Enraged at this idea he started up, crossed the dark passage (which filled him with horrible impressions and gloomy forebodings), and set out once more for Rogojin's. Rogojin had not returned, and no one came to the door. He rang at the old lady's door opposite, and was informed that Parfen Semionovitch would not return for three days. The curiosity with which the old servant stared at him, again impressed the prince disagreeably. He could not find the dvornik this time at all.

As before, he crossed the street and watched the windows from the other side, walking up and down in anguish of soul for half an hour or so. Nothing stirred, the blinds were motionless; indeed, the prince began to think that the former apparition of Rogojin's face could have been nothing but fancy. Soothed with this thought the prince drove off once more to his old friends at the Ismailofsky barracks. He was expected there. The mother had already been to three or four places to look for Nastasia, but had not found a trace of any kind.

The prince said nothing, but entered the room, sat down silently, and stared at them, one after the other, with the air of a man who cannot make head or tail of what is being said to him. It was strange—at one moment he seemed to be so observant, the next so absent; his behaviour struck the old ladies as most remarkable. At length he rose from his seat and begged to be shown Nastasia's rooms. The ladies reported afterwards how that he had examined everything in the apartments; that he had observed an open book on the table, and had requested the leave of the lady of the house to take it

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with him. He had turned down the leaf at the open place and pocketed the book before the old lady could explain that it was a library book. He had then seated himself at the open window. Seeing a card-table, he asked who played cards.

He was informed that Nastasia used to play with Rogojin every evening, either at "préférence" or "little fool," or "whist;" that this had been their practice since her last arrival from Pavlofsk; that she had taken to this amusement because she did not like to see Rogojin sitting silent and dull for whole evenings at a time; that the day after Nastasia had made a remark to the above effect, Rogojin had whipped a pack of cards out of his pocket. Nastasia had laughed, but soon took to playing. The prince asked, where were the cards? but was told that Rogojin used to bring a new pack every day, and always carried away the old ones in his pocket.

The good ladies recommended the prince to try knocking at Rogojin's once more—not at once, but in the evening. Meanwhile, the mother would go to Pavlofsk to inquire at Daria Alexeyevna's whether anything had been heard of Nastasia there; the prince was to come back at ten o'clock and meet her, to hear her news and arrange plans for the morrow.

In spite of the kindly-meant consolations of his new friends, the prince walked to his hotel in inexpressible anguish of spirit, through the hot, dusty streets of the capital, so unsavoury in summer time. Arrived at his destination, he determined to rest awhile in his room before he started off for Rogojin's once more. He sat down, rested his elbows on the table and his head on his hands, and fell to thinking.

Heaven knows how long and upon what subject he thought. He thought of many things—of Vera Lebedeff, and of her father; of Hippolyte; of Rogojin himself, first as at the funeral, then as he had met him in the park, then suddenly, as they had met in this very passage, outside here, when Rogojin had watched in the darkness and awaited his passing with uplifted knife. The prince remembered his enemy's eyes as they had glared at him then, in the darkness. He shuddered as a sudden idea struck him

This was, that if Rogojin were in Petersburg, though he might hide for a time, yet he was quite sure to come to him—the prince—before long, with either good or evil intentions, but probably with the same intention as on that other occasion. At all events, if Rogojin were to come at all he would be sure to seek the prince here, he had no other town address—perhaps in this same corridor; he might well seek him here if he

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needed him, yes, *if he needed him*. And who knows, perhaps he did need him, *now*; it was a dreadful thought. He would not come if all were well with him, that was part of the thought; he would come if all were not well; and certainly, undoubtedly, all would *not* be well with him; yes, it was a dreadful thought. The prince could not bear this new idea; he took his hat and rushed out towards the street. It was almost pitch dark in the passage.

"What if he were to come out of that corner as I go by and —and stop me?" thought the prince, as he approached the familiar spot. But no one came out.

He passed under the gateway and issued into the street; the crowds of people walking about—as is always the case at sunset in St. Petersburg during the summer—surprised him, but he walked on towards Rogojin's street, the Gorohovaya.

About fifty yards from the hotel, at the first cross road, as he passed through the crowd of foot passengers sauntering along, some one touched his shoulder, and said in a half whisper into his very ear:

"Lef Nicolaievitch, my friend, come along with me this way." It was Rogojin.

How strange it was; the prince immediately began to tell him eagerly and joyfully how he had but the moment before expected to see Rogojin in the dark passage of the hotel.

"I *was* there," said Rogojin, unexpectedly. "Come along."

The prince was surprised at this answer; but his astonishment only commenced a couple of minutes afterwards, when he began to consider it. Having thought over the reply, he became frightened and glanced at Rogojin in alarm. The latter was striding along a yard or so ahead, looking straight in front of him, and mechanically allowing anyone he might meet to pass.

"Why did you not ask for me in my room if you were in the hotel?" asked the prince, suddenly.

Rogojin stopped and looked at him; then reflected and replied as though he had not heard the question:

"Look here, Lef Nicolaievitch, you go on straight to the house, my house; I shall walk on the other side. See that we go along together at the same pace."

So saying, Rogojin crossed the road.

Arrived at the opposite pavement, he looked back to see whether the prince was moving on, waved his hand in the direction of the Gorohovaya, and strode on, looking across every moment to see whether the prince understood his instructions. The prince supposed that Rogojin desired to look

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out for someone on the way whom he was afraid to miss; but if so, why had he not told *him* whom to look out for? So the two proceeded for half a mile or so. Suddenly the prince began to tremble from some unknown cause. He could not bear it, and signalled to Rogojin across the road.

The latter came at once.

"Is Nastasia Philipovna at your house?"

"Yes."

"And was it you looked out of the window under the blind this morning?"

"Yes."

"Then why did—"

But the prince could not finish his question; he did not know what to say. Besides this, his heart was beating so that he found it difficult to speak at all. Rogojin was silent also and looked at him as before; that is with an expression of thoughtfulness.

"Well, I'm going," he said, at last, preparing to recross the road; "you go along here as before; we will keep to different sides of the road; it's better so, you'll see—"

When they reached the Gorohovaya, and came near the house, the prince's legs were so feeble and trembling that he could hardly walk. It was about ten o'clock. The old lady's windows were open, as before; Rogojin's were all shut, and in the darkness the white blinds stood out whiter than ever. Rogojin and the prince each approached the house on his respective side of the road; Rogojin, who was on the near side, beckoned the prince across. The prince went over to the doorway.

"Even the dvornik does not know that I have come home now. I told him, and told them at my mother's too, that I was off to Pavlofsk," said Rogojin, with a cunning and almost satisfied leer. "We'll go in quietly and nobody will hear us."

He had the door key in his hand. Mounting the staircase he turned and signalled the prince to go more softly; he opened the door very quietly, let the prince in, followed him, locked the door behind him, and put the key in his pocket.

"Come along," he whispered.

He had spoken in a whisper all the way. In spite of his apparent composure, outwardly, he was evidently in a state of great mental agitation. Arrived in a large salon, next to the study, he went to the window and cautiously beckoned the prince up to him:

"When you rang the bell this morning I thought it must be yourself; I went to the door on tip-toes and heard you talking to the old servant opposite. I had told her before that if anyone came and rang—especially yourself, and I gave her your

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name—she was not to let on about me. Then I thought, what if he goes and stands opposite and looks up, or waits about to watch the house? So I came to this very window, looked out, and there you were, looking straight at me. That's how it all came about."

"Where is Nastasia Philipovna?" asked the prince, panting.

"She's here," replied Rogojin, slowly, and after a slight pause.

"Where?"

Rogojin raised his eyes to the prince and gazed intently at him.

"Come," he said.

He continued to speak in a whisper, and very deliberately as before, and strangely thoughtful and grave he looked. Even while he told the story of how he had peeped through the blind he gave the impression of wishing to say something else. They entered the study. In this room some changes had taken place since the prince was last inside it. The whole chamber was divided into two equal parts by a large silk curtain stretched across it, with divisions at either end for passing through into the alcove beyond; in this alcove was now placed Rogojin's bed.

The heavy curtain was drawn now, and the side entrances closed up. But it was very dark. The bright Petersburg summer nights were already beginning to close in; so that, excepting by moonlight, it would have been difficult to distinguish anything in Rogojin's dismal house at night-time, with the blinds down. One could just distinguish faces, however, though not in detail. Rogojin's face was white, as usual. His eyes glared steadfastly at the prince, lustrous and glowing, but with marvellous immobility.

"Had you not better light a candle?" said the prince.

"No, I needn't," replied Rogojin, and taking the other by the hand he seated him in a chair; he himself took a chair opposite and drew it up so close that he almost pressed against the prince's knees. At their side was a little round table.

"Sit down," said Rogojin; "let's rest a bit." There was silence for a moment.

"I knew you would be at that hotel," he continued, just as men sometimes commence a serious conversation by discussing any outside subject for a moment or two before leading up to the main point. "As I entered the passage it struck me that perhaps you were sitting and waiting for me, just as I was waiting for you to come to me. Have you been at the old lady's at Ismailofsky barracks?"

"Yes," said the prince, squeezing the words out with difficulty owing to the dreadful beating of his heart.

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"I thought you would— 'They'll talk about it,' I thought; so I determined to go and fetch you to spend the night here— 'we shall all be together then,' I thought, 'for this one night—'"

"Rogojin, *where* is Nastasia Philipovna?" said the prince, suddenly rising from his seat. He was quaking in all his limbs, and his words came in a scarcely audible whisper. Rogojin rose also.

"There," he whispered, nodding his head towards the curtain.

"Asleep?" whispered the prince.

Rogojin looked intently at him again, as before.

"Let's go in—but you mustn't—well—let's go in."

He lifted the curtain, paused—and turned to the prince:

"Go in," he said, motioning him to pass behind the curtain. The prince went in.

"It's so dark," he said.

"You can see quite enough," muttered Rogojin.

"I can just see there's a bed—"

"Go nearer," suggested Rogojin.

The prince took a step forward—then another—and paused. He stood and stared before him for a minute or two. Neither of the men spoke a word while at the bedside. The prince's heart beat so loud that its knocking seemed to be distinctly audible in the deathly silence of the chamber.

But now his eyes had become so far accustomed to the darkness that he could distinguish the whole of the bed. Someone was asleep upon it—sleeping an absolutely motionless sleep. Not the slightest movement was perceptible, not the faintest of breathing was distinguishable. The sleeper was covered from the head down with a white sheet; yet the outline of the limbs was—somehow—hardly distinguishable underneath. The gazer could just make out, by the elevation of the sheet, that a human being lay outstretched beneath it.

All around, on the bed, on a chair beside it, on the floor, were scattered the different portions of a magnificent white silk dress, bits of lace, and rich ribbon. On a small table at the pillow glittered a mass of diamonds, torn off and thrown down anyhow. From under a heap of lace at the end of the bed peeped one small white foot, which looked as though it had been chiselled out of marble; terribly, dreadfully still and white it seemed.

The prince gazed and gazed, and felt that the more he gazed the more deadly became the silence. Suddenly a fly awoke somewhere and buzzed across the room, hovered over the bed, and settled in silence on the pillow. The prince shuddered.

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"Let's go out," said Rogojin, touching his shoulder. They left the alcove and sat down in the two chairs they had occupied before—opposite one another. The prince trembled more and more violently, and never took his questioning look off Rogojin's face.

"I see you are shuddering, Lef Nicolaievitch," said the latter, at length; "almost as you did once in Moscow, or at that other time before your fit, don't you remember? I don't know yet what I shall do with you—"

The prince bent forward to listen, putting all the strain he could muster upon his understanding in order to take in what Rogojin said, and continuing to gaze questioningly at the latter's face.

"Is that—your doing?" he muttered, at last, motioning with his head towards the curtain.

"Yes, mine," whispered Rogojin, and sank into silence.

Neither man spoke for five minutes.

"Because, you know," Rogojin recommenced, as though continuing a former sentence, "if you were ill now, or had a fit, or screamed or anything, they might hear it in the yard, or even in the street, and guess that someone was passing the night in the house; they would all come and knock and want to come in because they know I am not at home. I didn't light a candle for the same reason. When I am not here—for two or three days at a time, now and then—no one comes in to tidy the house or anything; those are my orders. So that I want them not to know we are spending the night here—"

"Wait," interrupted the prince, "I asked both the dvornik and the old woman whether Nastasia Philipovna had spent last night in the house; so they knew—"

"I know you asked. I told them that she had called in for ten minutes, and then gone straight back to Pavlofsk. No one knows she slept here. Last night we came in just as carefully as you and I did to-day. I thought as I came along with her that she would not like to creep in so carefully; I was quite wrong. She whispered, and walked on tip-toe—she tore her skirt half off, and carried it over her arm, so that it shouldn't rustle, and she held up her finger at me on the stairs, so that I shouldn't make a noise—it was *you* she was afraid of. She was half mad with terror in the train, and she begged me herself to bring her to this house. I thought of taking her to the old lady at Ismailofsky barracks first; but she wouldn't hear of it. She said, 'No—not there; he'll find me out at once there. Take me to your own house, where you can hide me, and to-morrow

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early send me off to Moscow.' Thence she would go to Oreol, she said. When she went to bed, she was still talking about going to Oreol."

"Wait. What do you intend to do now, Parfen?"

"Well, I'm afraid of you, you see; you shudder and tremble so. We'll pass the night here together. There are no other beds here besides that one; but I've thought how we'll manage. I'll take all the cushions off all the sofas, and lay them down on the floor, up against the curtain here—both for you and for me—so that we shall all be together, and close to one another. For if they come in and look about now, you know, they'll find her, and carry her away, and they'll be asking me questions, and I shall say I did it, and then they'll carry me away, too, don't you see? So let her lie close to us—close to you and me."

"Yes, yes," confirmed the prince, with warmth.

"Then we are not to say anything about it, and not to let them carry her away from us?"

"Not for anything!" cried the other; "no, no, no!"

"So I had decided, my friend, not to give her up to anyone to-night," continued Rogojin. "We'll be very quiet. I have only been out of the house one hour all day, all the rest of the time I have been by her. I daresay the air is very bad here. Do you find it bad?"

"I don't know—perhaps—by morning it will be."

"I've covered her with oil-cloth—best American oil-cloth, and put the sheet over that, and she's lying so still; you shall see in the morning when it's light. What! can't you get up?" asked Rogojin, seeing the other was trembling so that he could not rise from his seat.

"My legs won't move," said the prince; "it's fear, I know. When my dread is over, the shuddering will pass, and I'll get up—"

"Wait a bit—I'll make the beds, and you can lie down. I'll lie down, too, and we'll listen and watch, for I don't know yet what I shall do with you. I tell you beforehand, so that you may be ready in case I—"

Muttering these disconnected words, Rogojin began to make the beds. It was clear that he had devised these beds long before; last night he slept on the sofa. But there was no room for two on the sofa, and he seemed anxious that he and the prince should be close to one another; therefore, he now dragged cushions of all sizes and shapes from the sofas, and made a sort of bed of them up against the curtain. He then approached the prince, and courteously gave him a hand to

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help him to lie down on this novel bed. But it turned out that the prince could now rise and move from his seat by himself, so that his dread must have passed; for all that, however, he continued to shudder.

"It's hot weather, you see," continued Rogojin, "and, naturally, the air will be close and bad here. I daren't open the window; my mother has some beautiful flowers in pots; they have a delicious scent; I thought of fetching them in, but that old servant will find out, she's very inquisitive—"

"Yes, she is inquisitive," assented the prince.

"I thought of buying flowers, and putting them all round her, but I was sorry, somehow—"

"Look here," said the prince; he was bewildered, and his brain wandered; he seemed to be continually groping for the questions he wished to ask, and immediately losing touch of them when framed. "Listen—tell me—how did you—with a knife?—that same one?"

"Yes, that same one."

"Wait a minute, I want to ask you something else, Parfen, all sorts of things, but tell me first, did you intend to kill her before my wedding, at the church door, with your knife?"

"I don't know whether I did or not," said Rogojin, drily, seeming to be a little astonished with the question, and not quite taking it in.

"Did you never take your knife to Pavlofsk with you?"

"No. As to the knife," he added, "this is all I can tell you about it;" he was silent for a moment, and then added, "I took it out of the locked drawer this morning about three, for it was in the morning all—this—happened. It has been inside the book ever since—and—and—this is what is such a marvel to me, the knife only went in an inch, or a couple of inches at most, just under her left breast, and there wasn't more than half a tablespoonful of blood altogether, not more."

"Yes—yes—yes—" The prince jumped up in extraordinary agitation, "I know, I know, I've read of that sort of thing—it's hemorrhage, you know; sometimes there isn't a drop—if the blow is straight to the heart—"

"Wait—listen!" cried Rogojin, suddenly, starting up. "Someone's walking about, do you hear? in the hall." Both sat up to listen.

"I hear," said the prince, whispering.

"Are they moving?"

"Yes."

"Shall I shut the door, and lock it, or not?"

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"Yes, lock it."

He locked the door, and both lay down again. There was a long silence.

"Yes, by-the-bye," whispered the prince, hurriedly and excitedly as before, as though he had just seized hold of an idea and was afraid of losing it again, "I—I wanted those cards. They say you played cards with her?"

"Yes, I played with her," said Rogojin, after a short silence.

"Where are the cards?"

"Here they are," said Rogojin, after a still longer pause. "Here—"

He pulled out a pack of cards, wrapped in a bit of paper, from his pocket, and handed them across to the prince. The latter took them, but with a sort of perplexity. A new, sad, helpless feeling had taken hold of his heart; he had suddenly realised that not only at this moment, but for a long while, he had not been talking about that which he wished to discuss; and had not been acting as he would choose to act; and that these cards which he held in his hand, and which he had been so delighted to find at the first moment, were now of no use—no use. He rose, and wrung his hands. Rogojin lay motionless, and seemed neither to hear nor see his movements; but his eyes blazed in the darkness, and were fixed and steadfast in their wild gaze in front of him.

The prince sat down on a chair, and began to watch him in alarm. Half an hour went by.

Suddenly Rogojin burst into a loud abrupt laugh, as though he had quite forgotten that he ought to whisper.

"That officer, eh!—that young officer—don't you remember that fellow at the music? eh? Ha, ha, ha! Didn't she whip him smartly, eh?"

The prince jumped up from his seat in renewed terror. When Rogojin quieted down (which he did at once) the prince bent over him, sat down beside him, and with painfully beating heart and still more painful breath, began to watch his face carefully. Rogojin never turned his head, and seemed to have forgotten all about him. The prince gazed on and waited. Time went on—it began to grow light.

Rogojin commenced to wander—muttering disconnectedly; then he took to shouting and laughing. The prince stretched out his trembling hand and gently stroked his hair and his cheeks—he could do nothing more. His legs trembled so and he felt no support in them. Some novel sensation came over him, filling his heart and soul with ineffable anguish.

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Meanwhile the daylight was full and strong; and at last the prince lay down—quite helpless—full of despair,—and laid his cheek against the white motionless cheek of Rogojin; his tears trickled down into Rogojin's face—probably quite unconsciously as far as the latter was concerned. At all events when, after many hours, the door was opened and people thronged in, they found the murderer perfectly demented and in a state of raging fever. The prince was sitting by him motionless, and—each time that the sick man gave a cry, or a laugh, or a shout—hastened to pass his own trembling hand over his companion's hair and cheeks, as though trying to soothe and quiet him. But alas! he understood nothing of what was said to him, and recognised none of those who crowded in and surrounded him.

If Schneider himself had arrived from Switzerland and looked at his former pupil and patient,—even he—remembering the poor prince's condition during the first year of his treatment in Switzerland,—even Schneider would have wrung his hands and cried out as he did then: "an idiot—a poor idiot!"

XII.

WHEN the old lady hurried away to Pavlofsk she went straight to Daria Alexeyevna's house, and telling all she knew, threw the latter lady into the greatest alarm. Both ladies decided to enter into relations with Lebedeff at once—as the friend of his lodger and in his capacity of master of the prince's house. Vera Lebedeff told all she knew, too.

By Lebedeff's advice it was decided that all three should go to Petersburg as quickly as possible in order to avert the calamity "which might so easily happen."

This is how it came about that at about eleven o'clock next morning Rogojin's lodging was opened by the police in the presence of Lebedeff, the two ladies, and Rogojin's own brother, who lived in the wing.

The evidence of the dvornik was what went further than anything else towards the success of Lebedeff in gaining the assistance of the police; he declared that he had seen Rogojin return to the house last night, accompanied by a friend, and that both had gone upstairs very carefully and cautiously. After

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this there was no hesitation about breaking open the door, since it could not be got open any other way. Rogojin suffered from brain fever for two months; when he recovered from the attack he was at once brought up on trial for murder.

He gave full, satisfactory, and direct evidence on every point; and the prince was, thanks to Rogojin's evidence, acquitted at the very commencement of the proceedings. Rogojin was very quiet during the progress of the trial. He did not contradict his clever and eloquent counsel who argued that the brain fever, or inflammation of the brain, was the cause of the crime; clearly proving that this malady had existed long before the murder was perpetrated, and had been brought on by grief suffered earlier in life by the criminal in the dock.

But Rogojin added no words of his own in confirmation of this view, and just as before, he detailed with marvellous exactness, the execution of his crime. He was convicted, but with extenuating circumstance, and condemned to work in the mines in Siberia for fifteen years, and heard his sentence coldly, silently, and thoughtfully. His whole colossal fortune, with the exception of the comparatively small portion wasted by him in the first wild, wanton period of his inheritance, went to his brother, to the great satisfaction of the latter.

The old lady, Mrs. Rogojin, is still alive, and remembers her dear Parfen sometimes, but not clearly. God spared her heart and head the knowledge of this last dreadful calamity, which had overtaken her house.

Lebedeff, Keller, Gania, Ptitsin, and many other friends of ours continued to live as before; there is scarcely any change in any of them, so that there is no need to tell of their subsequent doings.

Hippolyte died in great agitation, and rather sooner than he expected, about a fortnight after Nastasia Philipovna's death. Colia was much impressed with the event, and he once and forever drew near to his mother in heart and sympathy. Nina Alexandrovna is frightened for him, because he is "thoughtful beyond his years;" but he will, we think, make a good man.

The prince's further fate was more or less decided by Colia's action. The latter selected, out of all the persons he had met during the last six or seven months, Evgenie Pavlovitch, as friend and confidant; and to him he made over all the news he had gathered as to the events above recorded, and as to the present condition of the prince. He was not far wrong in his choice. Evgenie Pavlovitch took the deepest interest in the fate of the unfortunate "idiot," and, thanks to his interference

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and trouble in the matter, the prince found himself once more in Dr. Schneider's hands, in Switzerland.

Evgenie Pavlovitch, who went abroad at this time, intending to live a long while on the continent, being, as he often said, quite an "extra" person in Russia, often visited his poor sick friend at Schneider's; that is, once every few months.

But Dr. Schneider frowns ever more and more and strokes his head; he hints that the brain is fatally injured; he does not as yet declare that his patient is incurable, but he allows himself to express the gravest fears.

Evgenie takes this much to heart, and he has a heart too; this last fact is proved by the circumstance that he receives and even answers letters from Colia. But besides this, another strange trait in his character has become apparent, and as it is a good trait we will make haste to reveal it. After each visit to Schneider's establishment, Evgenie Pavlovitch writes another letter, besides that to Colia, a letter full of the most minute particulars concerning the poor invalid's condition. In these letters is to be detected, in each one more than the last, a growing feeling of friendship and sympathy.

The individual who corresponds thus with Evgenie Pavlovitch, and who engages so much of his attention and respect, is Vera Lebedeff. We have never been able to discover clearly how such relations have sprung up; of course the root of them was in the events which we have already recorded, and which so impressed Vera with grief on the prince's account, that she fell seriously ill. But how the acquaintance and friendship came about we cannot say. We have spoken of these letters chiefly because in them is often to be found some news of the Epanchin family, and of Aglaya in particular.

Evgenie Pavlovitch wrote of her from Paris, that after a short and strange attachment to a certain Polish count, she had suddenly married the latter, quite against the wishes of her parents, though they had eventually given their consent; and that the union seemed pregnant with dangerous consequences. Then, after a six months' silence, Evgenie Pavlovitch informed his correspondent, in a long letter, full of detail, that while paying his last visit to Dr. Schneider's establishment in Switzerland, he had there come across the whole Epanchin family (excepting the general who had remained in St. Petersburg) and Prince S. The meeting was a strange one. They all received Evgenie Pavlovitch with effusive delight; Adelaida and Alexandra considered themselves somehow indebted to him for his "angelic sympathy towards the unhappy prince."

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Lizabetha Prokofievna, when she saw the poor young fellow, last named, in his enfeebled and humiliating condition, had burst into tears, and wept with all her heart. Apparently all was forgiven.

As for Aglaya's Polish count, he turned out to be no count at all, but an emigrant of shady and suspicious antecedents. He had, however, so humbugged Aglaya, that even before she was married to him he had persuaded her to assist in the construction of some foreign society for the restoration of Poland. She had also become a Roman Catholic under the attacks of some eminent father who had managed to gain an extraordinary ascendency over her mind. Her husband's colossal possessions, of the existence of which he had assured Lizabetha Prokofievna and Prince S., turned out to be non-existant.

Besides this, before they had been married half a year, the count and his friend the priest managed to bring about a quarrel between Aglaya and her family, so that it was now several months since they had seen her. In a word, there was a great deal to say; but Mrs. Epanchin, and her daughter, and Prince S. were still so overwhelmed with the "terror" (as they called it) of Aglaya's latest sallies and adventures, that they did not even talk of them, though they must have known that Evgenie knew all about her without requiring any disclosures from them.

Poor Lizabetha Prokofievna was most anxious to get home, and, according to our friend Evgenie, she criticised everything foreign with much hostility.

"They can't bake bread anywhere, decently; and they all freeze in their houses, during winter, like a lot of mice in a cellar. At all events, I've had a good Russian cry over this poor fellow," she added, pointing with some agitation to the prince, who had not recognised her in the slightest degree. "So enough of this nonsense; it's time we faced the truth; all this continental life, all these foreign baths, and all the trash about 'going abroad' is simply a lot of nonsense; and it is just absurdity and fantastic foolery on our part to have come. Remember what I say, my friend, you'll live to agree with me yourself.'

So spake the good old lady, almost angrily, as she took leave of Evgenie Pavlovitch.

THE END.

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